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STRUCTURES AND IDEAS IN SOYINKA'S MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Structures and Ideas in Soyinka's Madmen and Specialists," submitted by Muzi-Pasi E. Shumba in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

James V. DeFelice
Supervisor

Ben Tarver

Sheila Watson

Date 28th August, 1973.

To my wife Nancy and son Kaunoni who courageously endured a two-year separation.

ABSTRACT

The thesis is an analysis of structures and ideas in one play, Madmen and Specialists, by Wole Soyinka who is perhaps the best known playwright in English-speaking Africa today.

The play is an anti-war statement specifically directed at the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) but since Soyinka sees the war in terms of human nature, the ideas expressed have relevance to humanity in general. Ideas develop from the specific to the general so do the means through which they are expressed. Soyinka is a Yoruba, one of the large ethnic groups in Nigeria and he uses Yoruba mythology in moulding the characters. And because Soyinka does this, the first chapter of the thesis is largely an introduction of relevant Yoruba myths. In Chapters II and III, the ideas of the play are analyzed and parallels drawn with the myths.

Closely linked to Yoruba myths is the Christian idea of the constancy of God summarized in the liturgy, "As it was in the beginning, so it is now and ever it shall be, world without end, Amen." Soyinka uses the idea of the Christian liturgy because it is similar to the Yoruba idea of recurrence expressed in such myths as the Abiku child, a child who is born, dies and comes back again until the chain is

broken through rituals. The parallel between the Christian idea of the liturgy and the Yoruba myths puts the myths within the general context of human experience since the Christian idea is known almost everywhere.

Other plays of Wole Soyinka and his novel have been used as they help explain some of the ideas in Madmen and Specialists.

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Acknowledgements in a thesis like this one should appropriately start with people who are closely associated with the work itself but I shall mention other names that are distant to the work but never-the-less very important.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

YORUBA MYTHOLOGY; THE OGUN DUALITY, NEGRITUDE AND THE EARLY WORKS; THE OGBONI CULT, SACRIFICES AND RECURRENCE

1. Yoruba Mythology

In their mythology,[1] the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria believe in a pantheon of divinities collectively known as the orisha. The principal divinities are Orisha-nla, Ogun, Orunmila, Eshu, Shango, Shopona and Ela. The lesser ones are numerous and unnamed, except in the collective sense, and they originated from Orisha-nla who is also known as Obatala. The myth says that Orisha-nla was shattered to bits with a rock rolled on him by a jealous slave[2] and the scattered bits were collected together by Orunmila who distributed them to all parts of Yorubaland and that marked the beginning of Orisha worship.[3] Orisha-nla is considered to be the representative of Olodumare on earth and Olodumare is the equivalent of the Christian God. He dwells in the sky from where he sees everything done on earth by the Orisha and the human beings. Olodumare has delegated his authority to the named divinities, Orisha-nla and the others to whom specific responsibilities have been given. Orisha-nla is the most senior[4] in the group and he is sometimes called the descendant of Olodumare. Like Olodumare, Obatala is

considered to be an Old Man dressed in white and the colour white symbolises purity as Idowu points out:

> Orisha-nla[5] represents to the Yoruba, the idea of ritual and ethical purity and therefore the demands and sanctions of high morality. Immaculate whiteness is often associated with him--this symbolises "holiness" and purity. He is often pictured as an ancient clothed in white and bedecked with white ornaments. His temple, especially on the inside, is washed white; his emblems are to be kept in white containers and consist among other things of white chalk and white beads; his priests and priestesses are robed in white and wear white ornaments.[6]

The association of the colour white with Orisha-nla is stressed by another writer, Obotunde Ijimere, who prefers the name Obatala to Orisha-nla. In his play, The Imprisonment of Obatala, he compares the whiteness of the yam and teeth to that of Obatala's gown:

> Yam yam yam
> You are whiter than the cattle egret
> Whiter than teeth
> Whiter than the gown of Obatala (Italics mine).[7]

As the direct descendant of Olodumare, Orisha-nla is given the power of creation. It is he who moulds the physical body of each individual, after which Olodumare puts the "life-force" into the moulded body and the only other divinity present on this occasion is Orunmila. The fate of each individual is sealed at the time the "life-force" is given so that Orunmila is the only divinity on earth who knows the destiny of each individual. That is why Ifa[8] divination is associated with him. Ogun as a creative artist is concerned only with the decorative aspects of man after birth and his function, in this respect, consists of

making tribal markings and carrying out minor surgical operations like circumcision. After the release of Obatala from imprisonment in Ijimere's play, Ogun makes reference to this aspect of his functions:

> Father of laughter
> Your reign has begun
> Once more you have come to us
> To turn blood into children.
> I bow to the master craftsman
> Who moulds the red clay
> Who makes eyes and makes nose.
> The child in the womb will live again:
> Your shielding hand once more
> Blesses our women.
> I shall retire from your dazzling presence,
> Your immaculate whiteness
> Drives me back into the darkness of my forest.
> Now the blood will dry on swords and arrows
> The elders forging weapons in the smithy
> Will grow fat.
> The river of blood that fed me has dried up.
> I will have to be satisfied with a trickle
> That flows from circumcisions and tribal
> Markings.[9]

As a divinity responsible for the creation of man, Obatala has wide powers to do as he likes. He can withhold babies and also create deformed ones like the cripple, the blindman, the hunchback, the albino, the leper and the epileptic. Through the deformed people Obatala reveals his will.[10] The Yoruba women consider it to their advantage to be on good terms with Obatala and their prayer to him says, "Obatala:/you turn blood into children/come and create a baby in my own belly."[11]

One other quality of Orisha-nla which is relevant to this thesis is his patience in suffering and Soyinka has stated that the drama which stems out of Obatala's suffering

is equivalent to the European passion play:

> Yoruba myth equates Obatala, god of purity, god also of creation (but not of creativity!) with the first deity Orisa nla. And the ritual of Obatala is a play of form, a moving celebration whose nearest equivalent in the European idiom is the Passion play. The drama is all essence--captivity, suffering and redemption; Obatala is symbolically captured, confined and ransomed. At every stage he is the embodiment of the suffering spirit of man, uncomplaining, agonised, full of the redemptive qualities of the spirit of endurance and martyrdom.[12]

In The Imprisonment of Obatala, Ijimere has captured something of this martyrdom. The plot is a series of encounters in which, Eshu, the trickster divinity, leads Obatala into a number of unpleasant situations. The final one is a quarrel which he instigates between Obatala and Shango. As a result of this quarrel, Obatala is imprisoned for several years. During the period of Obatala's confinement, Shango is punished indirectly through his wives most of whom die because the foetuses rot in their bellies. The oracle (Ifa divination) advises Shango to release Obatala so that children may be born again.[13] In all these difficulties Obatala accepts his fate because he knows that the punishment is from Olodumare and that Eshu and Shango are mere agents. He makes the following points to Shango on his release:

> He who admits his fault
> Will not be kept kneeling for long.
> When death is not ready to receive somebody
> He will send him a doctor at the right time.
> So here I am at last
> Beholding the fire in your eyes again.
> Shango
> My suffering was not your doing.
> I had an account to settle
> With the God of fate.
> The owner of heaven has not forgiven me
> For in my drunkenness

I had made the Albino
Whose bleached skin is sore like the lepers,
I had made the hunchback
To whom women close their thighs
And the blind man
Who is helpless like a bat in sunlight.
Eshu, confuser of men,
Has brought my suffering about.
Throwing a stone today
He killed a bird yesterday;[14]
But let us now rejoice:
The taste of friendship lingers in the mouth
Like bitter kola nut.[15]
Friendship like lost virginity
Can never be undone.
True friendship never takes offence:
I asked you to be patient,
You were wildly impatient
And I loved you for it.
I asked you to be peaceful,
You steeped your arms in blood
But still I loved you for it.[16]

The patience of Obatala is graphically described by the Babalawo who in his capacity as priest to the Ifa divination foretells the future:

This was the prophecy of the King of Awe
Who conquered his foes through patience:
The river abuses the rock--
The rock keeps quiet.
The river attacks the rock--
The rock does not fight back.
The river shallows the rock--
The rock holds still.
But when the dry season comes
The river is lost in the sand
His fishes turn white bellies to heaven,
But the rock remains immobile
Where God has planted it.
Shango may thrive in war,
Orunmila may thrive through wisdom,
But you will thrive in suffering.[17]

2. The Ogun Duality, Négritude and Early Works

Among the Yoruba divinities, Ogun is of special interest in Soyinka's thought. He has called Ogun the

"first actor" in the sense that according to Yoruba myth, he was the first among the divinities who succeeded in reaching earth from heaven by cutting a path through the "transitional gulf."[18] That daring act by Ogun made it possible for the other divinities to reach the earth. Ogun is thus described as explorer and pathfinder. On his exploration trip, Ogun had two matchets, one for clearing the path, the other for fighting or hunting. After the divinities had settled down among men, they decided to honour Ogun for his success by making him king of a town in which they had first settled. Ogun was unwilling because a settled civilian life was not part of his nature. Eventually he accepted the honour after a lot of persuasion. But in one of his many campaigns against neighbouring towns, Ogun took palm-wine[19] before he went into battle and in a drunken state he slaughtered his own soldiers as well as enemies. The exploration aspect of Ogun represents the creative side but his exploits in the battle under the influence of drink represents the destructive side. Soyinka regards the ambivalence of the creative and destructive aspects of Ogun as essential qualities in all human beings and the phrase "the Ogun duality" is used in this thesis to mean this ambivalence. The concept of duality in Yoruba mythology extends to other divinities as well. In The Imprisonment of Obatala for example, Eshu is dressed in a gown half black and half red[20] and the contrast between Obatala and Ogun is described in terms of the Ogun duality. In the epilogue, Eshu says:

The time will come when the owner of Heaven
Will send me back to confuse the heads of men.
Then Ogun will burst out of his forest
To cool his parched throat with blood.
Then the father of laughter will be driven from the city.

And the rule of iron returns
For if Obatala is the right arm of the owner of Heaven
Ogun is his left arm.[21]
If Obatala's love is the right eye of the owner of the sun.

Ogun's iron is his left eye
For the owner of the world has interlocked creation and death
Insparably like mating dogs.[22]

The necessity of recognising the co-existence of good and evil, of creation and destruction, of left and right, is a theme with which Soyinka is concerned in all the "early works" and he brings it up in many different ways. He feels that Ogun, as the artist divinity, understands the conflicts imposed by the existence of duality and then concludes that the measure of any true artist is his capacity to understand the Ogun duality:

> On the arena of the living[23] when man is stripped of excrescences, when disasters and conflicts (the material of drama) have crushed and robbed him of self-consciousness and pretensions, he stands in present reality at the spiritual edge of this gulf, he has nothing left in physical existence which successfully impresses upon his spirit or psychic perception--it is at such moments that transitional memory takes over and intimations rack him of that intense parallel of his progress through the gulf of transition, of the dissolution of his self and his struggle and triumph over subsumation through the agency of will. It is this experience that the modern tragic dramatist recreates through the medium of physical contemporary action, reflecting emotions of the first active battle of the will through the abyss of dissolution. Ogun is the first actor in the battle and Yoruba tragic drama is the re-enactment of the cosmic conflict.
>
> To recognize why Ogun was elected for his role (and the penalty of horror which he had to pay for his dare) is to penetrate the symbolism of Ogun both as essence of

> suffering and as combative will within the cosmic embrace of the transitional gulf. We have said that nothing but the will--for that alone is left untouched --rescues being from annihilation within the abyss. Ogun is embodiment of Will and the Will is the paradoxical truth of destructiveness and creativeness in acting man. Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and psychic resources laid under stress by the most inimical forces of individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between the two contradictions. The resulting sensitivity is also the sensitivity of the artist and he is a profound artist only to the degree to which he comprehends and expresses the principle of destruction and recreation. Nor can we lose sight of the fact that Ogun is the artistic spirit, and not in the sentimental sense in which the rhapsodists of negritude would have us conceive the negro as pure artistic intuition (italics mine).[24]

This lengthy quotation is necessary because the essay from which it is taken tends to be obscure and repetitious. The obscurity is partly because Soyinka is discussing intangible ideas based on Yoruba mythology without introducing his audience to the basic myths, partly because he has compressed so many of the mythical ideas in one essay and lastly because he is trying to formulate a theory of drama based on Yoruba myths but closely parallel to the Greek theories of drama. The underlined phrases and sentences in the above quotation contain the major ideas some of which are explained in the footnotes. One of the most important ideas to emerge from the quotation is that Soyinka identifies himself with Ogun and the "Ogun duality"--the existence of two sides to a given situation--which is at the core of his philosophy.

The phrase "the rhapsodists of negritude" is a reference to the poets of Négritude mostly Francophone black writers. Négritude as a literary movement started in Paris

in the 1930's and 1940's with a group of three black students from the colonial territories of France in Africa and the West Indies. The men were Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal in Africa, Léon Damas of French Guiana and Aimé Césaire of the island of Martinique. The last two came from the West-Indies.[25] The poetry of Négritude was essentially protest poetry by young men who found themselves alienated in the Paris of the 1930 depression years and the difficult times of the Second World War. They went to Paris as a select group of évolué blacks and the French colonial policy of assimilation was aimed at making such évolués into Frenchmen and the theory was that the assimilated Frenchmen would abandon the cultures in which they were born.[26] In Paris the young black students found out that in practice the French public did not really accept them as Frenchmen so that they had to fall back on their own culture. At that time Léon Damas and Aimé Césaire had not been to Africa but their historical ties with Africa were strong enough on the emotional level for them to write poetry about Africa and African values. Because the poetry was assertive or angry, it tended to be romantic, seeing peace and innocence in Africa and violence in the West. A poem by David Diop of Senegal, called "Africa" is a good example of the poetry of négritude which tended towards protest and romanticism:

> Africa my Africa
> Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs
> Africa of whom my grandmother sings
> On the banks of the distant river
> I have never known you[27]

But your blood flows in my veins
Your beautiful blood that irrigates the fields
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your work
The work of your slavery
The slavery of your children
Africa tell me Africa
Is this your back that is bent
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation
This back trembling with red scars
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun
But a grave voice answers me
Impetuous son that tree young and strong
That tree there
In splendid loneliness amidst white and faded flowers
That is Africa your Africa
That grows again patiently obstinately
And its fruits gradually acquire
The bitter taste of liberty.[28]

In order to understand the reaction of English-speaking African writers a little background to modern African Literature[29] is helpful. Serious writing in English-speaking Africa was influenced by a periodical called Black Orpheus which was established in Nigeria in 1957 by Ulli Beier. The name came from Jean-Paul Satre's essay Orphée nègre.[30] Through the pages of Black Orpheus, the poetry of Négritude was introduced to Anglophone African writers. In 1963, Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier published a collection of poetry from Africa[31] in which they included translations of some of the poetry of the Francophone writers. These two men had ideas of their own about the poetry of Négritude and they tended to select and translate the poetry that best explained their point of view. Because of lack of adequate communications[32] the Anglophone African writers were greatly influenced by the ideas of Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier both

through Black Orpheus and the collection of poetry, but also they were influenced by English attitudes through the educational system in which they were brought up.[33]

By the time the English-speaking African writers were beginning to publish, the conditions[34] which led to the protest movement of the poetry of Négritude had changed and almost all the Anglophone African writers were under the age of twenty[35] when the Second World War ended in 1945. Thus they had not experienced what the originators of the poetry of Négritude had gone through. One of the most frequently quoted anti-Négritude statement is a distortion of Soyinka's more comprehensive remarks. He is generally reputed to have said, "A Tiger does not have to proclaim his tigritude." Although Soyinka clarified the statement,[36] his references to Négritude are still very confused. Sometimes he distinguishes the poetry of Négritude (e.g., the phrase "the rhapsodists of Negritude") but he is not always specific in his remarks. Négritude as a philosophy is best understood through the writings of Léopold Sédar Senghor who has defined it as "the sum total of Negro civilisation."[37] A careful reading of Senghor shows that his principal idea of culture is assimilation.[38] He believes that a culture which is capable of borrowing from the others has a chance to survive and to grow and the reason for insisting on awareness of African culture was partly survival of the culture and partly it was a matter of pride. From his writings, Senghor is not a narrow-minded nationalist, rather he is an internationalist

and the phrase "civilisation of the universal"[39] occurs very frequently in his writings. The main aim behind reviving African culture as far as Senghor's ideas went was so that Africa could make a contribution to the "civilisation of the universal." On the political front, Senghor's ideas of Négritude helped establish the Organisation of African Unity,[40] an organisation which has combined the Arab countries in North Africa with independent countries South of the Sahara[41] under African governments.

Soyinka's opposition to the poetry of Négritude was based on his belief in the Ogun duality. He would question the validity of the sentiments expressed in David Diop's poem "Africa," quoted above. The fact that Diop is writing about an experience foreign to him, "I have never known you/ But your blood flows in my veins" constitutes an "unfelt abstraction"[42] in Soyinka's view. He would also raise objections to the contrast the poem makes between the atrocities committed by Africa's "proud warriors" in their wars and "white oppression" implicit in the lines, "Is this your back that is bent/This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation."[43] As far as he is concerned, man everywhere is prone to violence[44] and the atrocities of the "proud ancestors" were just as bad as those of the whites. In all the "early works," Soyinka attempts to present "the other side" in order to redress the balance of opinion in whatever he discusses.

The phrase "early works" is used in this thesis to

mean the seven published plays[45]--A Dance of the Forests, The Lion and the Jewel, The Trials of Brother Jero, The Swamp Dwellers, The Strong Breed, The Road and Kongi's Harvest, also the novel, The Interpreters.[46] All these preceded Madmen and Specialists.[47] Thus the phrase is a sequential description rather than a generic one. Attempts to divide Soyinka's plays into genres would in any case be unrealistic because the core of his philosophy[48] in the early works and in Madmen and Specialists is substantially the same. For the present, a survey of the early works will be made with the specific intention of showing how Soyinka attempts to reveal the other side of an issue or a situation.

In A Dance of the Forests, Soyinka is concerned with what he believes to be the failure in the poets of Négritude to recognise the Ogun duality. The play deals with the theme of duality in terms of Nigerian nationalism[49] and the expectations of change at a time of transition from colonial rule to independence. The temptation to see only the bright side at this time was great and Soyinka was in effect showing the other side of the coin. He was commissioned to write a play for the celebration of Nigeria's independence in 1960 by a committee responsible for organizing the celebrations and he wrote A Dance of the Forests. The play was rejected by the committee and John Ferguson gives reasons for the committee's decision: "A Dance of the Forests satisfied no one. It was rejected by the Independence Committee who did not think that corruption, violence and lust formed a proper

image to set before the public at such a time. . . ."[50]

Ferguson's statement seems valid because the play can easily be misinterpreted as anti-nationalism. In the prologue, a character called Aroni who is a lame spirit says:

> I know who the Dead ones are. They are the guests of the Human Community who are neighbours to us of the Forest. It is their Feast, the Gathering of the Tribes. Their councillors met and said, Our fore-fathers must be present at this Feast. They asked us for ancestors, for the illustrious ancestors, and I said to Forest Head, let me answer their request. And I sent two spirits of the restless dead. . . .[51]

The restless dead are the Dead Man who in previous life was a captain in the Army of Mata Kharibu, emperor of an imaginary past African empire. The second is the Dead Woman who in previous life was wife to the captain, presently an expectant mother. These two characters are like the Unknown Soldier and his Wife in Peter Ustinov's play of the same name. The Dead Woman gives birth to a Half-Child towards the end of the play. These two adult characters and the Half-Child are symbolic representations of the past, the present and the future. The adults were associated with violence in the past and their recurrence is a sign that the past is also in the present. The Half-Child represents the future which is also in doubt because the past and the present have a bearing on the future. On the question of time and recurrence, Soyinka has stated: "It is necessary to recall again that the past is not a mystery and although the future (the unborn) is yet unknown, it is not a mystery to the Yoruba but co-existent in present consciousness."[52] The encounter

between the Dead Man, the Dead Woman and the Half-Child and the human characters--Demoke the artist, Madame Tortoise (Rola) who is a whore and Adenebi, the corrupt court clerk, is the main philosophical idea in the play but for the present our attention will be focused on the court of Mata Kharibu.

Since the poets of Négritude went to the past to discover the glory and bliss of Africa, Soyinka in a flash back recreates the dim past--the court of Mata Kharibu. Aroni says the empire existed some "eight centuries or more" ago. It is a glorious setting with pomp and colour but the principals are far from inspiring. The Queen is described as Madame Tortoise and thus she is associated with whoring like Rola. Mata Kharibu, "is angry; his eyes roll terribly; the court cowers."[53] Then we learn that Mata Kharibu's Queen was previously queen in the court of a neighbouring empire from where she was abducted by Mata Kharibu who is in the process of preparing an invasion to retrieve her wardrobe. The Warrior (the Dead Man), who is in charge of the armed forces refuses to lead his men into battle because he feels that the war is unjust. He is subsequently sold into slavery and the Court Historian takes a bribe from a Slave-Dealer. The war is publicly supported by the Court Historian who backs his arguments with historical precedents:

> Be quiet soldier! I have here the whole history of Troy. If you were not the swillage of pigs and could read the writings of wiser men, I would show you the magnificence of destruction of a beautiful city. I would reveal to you the attainments of men which lifted mankind to the ranks of gods and demi-gods.

> And who was the inspiration of this divine carnage? Helen of Troy, a woman whose honour became as rare a conception as her beauty. . . .[54]

A little later, in private conversation with the Slave-Dealer, the Historian describes the war which has failed because of the soldier's mutiny as a typical war: "we were so near to the greatness of Troy and Greece . . . I mean this is war as it should be fought . . . over nothing. . . ."[55] The ironical implications in the Historian's tirade against the Warrior inform the audience about the real intention of the playwright. The superficial splendour in the Court of Mata Kharibu is shown to be worthless since the ideals of fair play, honesty and respectability are lacking. It is a reminder to the poets of Négritude that their ancestors were no different from the Greeks or any other people for that matter because human beings share basic qualities everywhere.

Soyinka is both a creative artist and a chronicler. His plays tend to reflect immediate events in his home country, Nigeria, or in Africa. The image of the Half-Child in A Dance of the Forests was proved right by political events. In 1960, the Congo (now Zaire) was plunged in political chaos at a time the Belgian government granted independence. In 1966, Nigeria underwent two successive army mutinies in which top politicians in the Federal and State governments were killed and the seeds for the 1967 Nigerian Civil War were planted.[56] In 1966, another important political event took place in Ghana--the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah in a military coup d'etat. Ghana was the

first country to gain independence from the British in 1957 and its independence had direct bearing on the course of events in the other African countries. The overthrow of President NKrumah was in some ways a reflection that the hopes for independence had not been justified.

Kongi's Harvest parallels events in Ghana during the time of President NKrumah and in a way it is a continuation of the Half-Child image in A Dance of the Forests since it shows the situation a few years after independence. Some passages in Kongi's Harvest are almost identical with passages in a philosophical treatise written by President NKrumah in 1964 called Consciencism.[57] This philosophy will now be described so that the relationship it bears to Kongi's Harvest can be brought out.

The word "consciencism" was coined by NKrumah from the word "conscience." The addition of "ism" turned the word into a philosophical concept just as "NKrumahism" became a philosophy for followers of NKrumah. The word consciencism therefore means a philosophy in which the disciple becomes conscience of himself. In African terms this meant rejecting colonial rule and aspiring for self-determination. The definition which NKrumah gave to his philosophy is not detailed, he called it "a philosophy and ideology for decolonisation"[58] but its basic intention is similar to the explanation given above. In the book, Consciencism, NKrumah made a survey of philosophies from the Greek times to the present out of which a new one tailored for Africa and other

developing countries was formulated. Two key terms in Consciencism are "positive action" and "negative action"; the former represents forces of nationalism and the latter represents reactionary forces. Out of these opposing forces, a series of mathematical formulae are derived, showing probable results when certain factors are combined. In these formulae a colony is philosophically represented as:

$$Col.g \longleftrightarrow (na > pa)g$$ [59]

And the symbols in the formula are explained as follows:

(a) $\longleftrightarrow$ = if and only if

(b) Col.g = g is a colony

(c) Lib.g = g is a liberated country

(d) (na > pa)g = a territory in which negative action is greater than positive action.

In non-Consciencism language, the definition of a colony is as follows: "A country is a colony, if and only if negative action is greater than positive action." NKrumah listed colonies as South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese territories of Mozambique and Angola. Independent African countries including Ghana were in the list of liberated countries. The formulae are later summarized in a passage which has great bearing on Kongi's Harvest.

> We have seen that for purposes of true development, a liberated territory must embrace philosophical consciencism. In its materialist aspect, philosophical consciencism preserves a humanist egalitarianism. The philosophical materialism which forms a part of consciencism accommodates dialectic and holds it to be efficient cause of change. . . .[60]

This passage has three words ending in "ism" "consciencism," "egalitarianism" and "materialism" and in Kongi's Harvest the significance of "isms" is explored. But before getting into the play, Kongi's Harvest, a brief reference should be made to Professor Mazrui's article, "NKrumah: the Leninist Czar" which analyses the political career of NKrumah. As the title suggests, Professor Mazrui claims that NKrumah was attempting to be a Lenin as well as a Czar in Ghana. A sentence relevant to our discussion reads: "Like Lenin, NKrumah created 'the Circle'--a group of friends to discuss and formulate theories of revolution."[61] In Kongi's Harvest, Kongi is surrounded by a group of advisors--the Reformed Aweri Fraternity who are like 'the Circle.'

Kongi is president of Ismaland, an imaginary country but the name Ismaland originates from "isms." This is a land where "isms" abound as two lines from a song in the prologue suggest: "Ism to ism for ism is ism/Of isms and isms on absolute--ism. . . ."[62]

Kongi's Harvest is a political satire in which Kongi is depicted as a frightened man intensely interested in power but unable to use it for the benefit of the country. At the opening of the play Kongi is already firmly in control but he still wants to build a public image for himself and he decides that the best way is to take over the ceremonial duties traditionally belonging to Danlola, the local king. Danlola is required to hand the ceremonial yam publicly to Kongi as a mark of surrender to the president but the foxy old Danlola

is not keen on doing this. The main point which the play makes is that through the petty squabbles for power, Kongi and his ministers are failing to fulfill their main task. The country is harvesting nothing but the "isms" from Kongi and as the end of the play shows, Kongi himself harvests crimes as he is presented with the head of a political detainee executed on his orders.

The link between Consciencism and Kongi's Harvest is closest in a speech made by the Fifth Aweri, one of the two cynical men in the group of ministers. Although one of the group, essentially he is an outsider:

> A yes. Nor proverbs nor verse, only ideograms in algebric quantums. If the square of XQY (2bc) equals QA into the square root of X, then the progressive forces must prevail over the reactionary in the span of .32 of a single generation.[63]

A Dance of the Forests and Kongi's Harvest are the shattering of illusions created by memories of Africa's past greatness and the hopes for a bright future in which Soyinka involves a whole nation, Nigeria and Ismaland. In the remaining five published early plays and in the novel, the theme of the Ogun duality is also a shattering of illusions but the focus is on particular individuals. The community is nevertheless involved since the actions of the individuals affect the community and sometimes reflect its values. The Trials of Brother Jero is a very simple version of the Ogun duality in which the protagonist, Brother Jero, blatantly states his identity and machinations.

> I am a Prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination. . . . My master, the same one who brought me up in prophetic ways staked his claim and won a grant of land. I helped him. . . . What my old Master did not realize was that I was really helping myself.[64]

After this declaration, the play introduces a number of worshippers, the followers of Brother Jero. These people have faith in their prophet but he regards them as the source of income. He even calls them customers. Among these is Chume, a chief messenger in a government department. Chume has been seeking "spiritual"[65] help from Brother Jero because a nagging wife has kept him unhappy for sometime. Chume's wife also happens to be Brother Jero's creditor. As a rule, Brother Jero forbids the habit of wife-beating among his followers on religious grounds but when he learns that Chume's wife is the creditor who is giving him problems, he relaxes the rule against wife-beating specially for Chume. Later on Chume learns the facts and realizes that he has been led down a garden path.

In The Swamp Dwellers, a similar disclosure is made through a confrontation between Igwezu and the priest who is called the Kadiye. The Kadiye is priest to the serpent of the swamp, a local divinity, to which the community has given all it has in exchange for an illusory promise of protection and blessings.

The death of Eman in The Strong Breed, confronts two of the men, Jaguna and Oroge who are implicated in the ritual murder with the deeper issues of a traditional religious practice which they have so far accepted without

question. It is the belief in this particular community that once every year an individual should carry the sins of the community down to the river in a purification ritual ceremony. Such a person is not expected to return and if he does, he must be stoned to death. Eman is stoned according to the demands of the ritual. Jaguna and Oroge discover that the community does not appreciate their action and Jaguna suffers more from the incident because his daughter was in love with Eman and she cannot stand him any more. Nor can he call her by name and so he refers to her as "the viper."

Oroge: (almost whispering) What is it?

Jaguna: The viper.

[Oroge looks cautiously at the woman]

Oroge: I don't think she will even see you.

Jaguna: Are you sure? I am not in a frame of mind for another meeting with her.

Oroge: Let's go home.

Jaguna: I am sick to the heart of the cowardice I have seen tonight.

Oroge: That is the nature of men.

Jaguna: Then it is a sorry world to live in. We did it for them. It was all for their own common good. What did it benefit me whether the man lived or died. But did you see them? One and all they looked up at the man and words died in their throats.

Oroge: It was no common sight.

Jaguna: Women could not have behaved so shamefully. One by one they crept off like sick dogs. No one could raise a curse.

The death of Eman has raised the conscience of the community and at the end of the play, an impression is given that such a death would not happen again in this particular community.

In The Lion and the Jewel, the theme of duality is in the form of a conflict between traditional Yoruba ways of life represented by Baroka and modern ways of life represented by Lakunle, the school teacher. Implicit in this larger conflict is one of age and youth, for Baroka lives mainly according to the customs of the tribe and he is an old man; Lakunle is in the prime of life and he has ideas about what the future should be like. At the centre of the conflict is Sidi, a beautiful young woman of the village who attracts the attention of both Baroka and Lakunle thereby creating a love triangle situation. On this level Lakunle is a loser since Sidi eventually marries Baroka but the idea of progress as seen by Lakunle seems to interest Soyinka even more because Lakunle's ideas are distorted and they need to be balanced. These ideas permeate Lakunle's entire being including the clothes he wears which show his pretentions and lack of taste:

> The school master is nearly twenty-three. He is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waist-coat. He wears twenty-three-inch bottom trousers, and blanco-white tennis shoes.[67]

Progress to Lakunle means a clean sweep over-night of everything in his tribal customs as his attitude to the custom of bride-price[68] shows. He describes the custom as: "a savage

custom, barbaric, out-dated, rejected, denounced, accursed, excommunicated, archaic, degrading, humiliating, unspeakable, redundant. Retrogressive, remarkable, unpalatable.[69] This chain of epithets betrays Lakunle's lack of real knowledge of the ideas he is concerned with. The words have merely been memorized from the "Shorter Companion Dictionary," hence, the inclusion of the word "remarkable" at the end of the recitation. His own plans for the future are not inspiring either:

> When we are wed, you shall not walk or sit
> Tethered, as it were, to my dirtied heels.
> Together we shall sit at table
> --Not on the floor--and eat,
> Not with fingers, but with knives
> And forks, and breakable plates
> Like civilised beings.
> I will not have you wait on me
> Till I have dined my fill.
> No wife of mine, no lawful wedded wife
> Shall eat the leavings off my plate--
> That is for the children.
> I want to walk beside you in the street,
> Side by side and arm in arm
> Just like the Lagos couples I have seen
> High-heeled shoes for the lady, red paint
> On her lips. And her hair is stretched
> Like a magazine photo.[70]

Lakunle's concern for material acquisition is a very limited view of progress and if he had his way, the community would not benefit from his plans. Baroka is aware of the shallowness of Lakunle's ideas in this respect and the comments he makes on "progress" is an indication of his awareness: "I do not hate progress, only its nature which makes all roofs and faces look the same."[71]

In The Interpreters, Soyinka has linked a group

of about six professional young men, Sekoni, Sagoe, Egbo, Kola, Bandele and Lasunwon with the knowledge of the Ogun duality. These men have the sensitivity of an artist, in varying degrees, and through them the pretentions of society are revealed either by what they experience or by what they see. Sekoni is a qualified engineer who builds a power plant for a remote village but the plant, although completed, does not open because the men who make the important decisions are more interested in their own material well-being. A typical decision making board is described in a passage where Sagoe is interviewed for a job as reporter for one of the newspapers:

> Sagoe once again approached the board-room, filled, as with all boards, with Compensation Members. Lost elections, missed nominations, thug recruitment, financial backing, Ministerial in-lawfulness, Ministerial ponicing, general arse-licking, Ministerial concubinage, . . .[72]

The central point Soyinka is making is that the appointments to the boards are not based on the quality of leadership and service. The board which reviews Sekoni's plant decides not to have it opened because the Chairman is sole contractor to the plant project and it is to his advantage to have the project written-off:

> And the chairman chuckled and said, I knew he was our man. Get me the expat. expert. Hot from his last lucrative evaluation, came the expatriate expert. Expatriate, therefore impartial. Constitute yourself in a one-man commission of enquiry and probe the construction of our power station at Ijioha which was built without estimates approved expenditure. Is it unsafe for operation? and he winked, a truly expert expat. expert's wink. Thats the safest idea. You put it in technical language. And

> the expatriate expert came to Ijioha, saw and condemned. And the chairman read the report and said, that expert never fails me, salivating on the epithets, a wasteful expenditure, highly dangerous conditions, unsuitable materials, unsafe for operation. Bring me the Write-off file, chortled the chairman. And the project was written off while parliament at question time resounded to the escapade of the mad engineer. Interdict him shall we? Bring me Form S2/7 Interdiction of Senior Civil Servants and Confidential File Sekoni Chief Engineer in charge Ijioha. And the chairman--for his subsidiary company registered in the name of his two-month-old niece had been sole contractor for Project Ijioha--cleared out a few thousands in immediate compensation and filed claims for a few thousands more. I always say it, the Write-Offs pay better than fulfilled contracts.[73]

The expatriate expert is used by the chairman of the board merely as a shield to advance his own interests. But Sekoni is shattered by this experience and he literally runs mad. Soyinka looks at Sekoni as a typical sensitive artist and the experience which he undergoes is the crossing of the "transitional gulf." The struggle leads to a creative experience and Sekoni ends up by turning out his first and only sculpture which he calls "the Wrestler."[74] Kola who is a trained artist considers it a masterpiece.

In The Interpreters, the subject of religion is treated almost as in The Trials of Brother Jero. This time the focus is on Lazarus, the albino, who is leader of a congregation. He is basically well intentioned but his understanding of the Bible is extremely limited and as a result he interprets the verses out of context. Lazarus appoints a young boy named Barabbas to be one of his twelve apostles justifying the appointment with a Biblical argument: "and in his name, unto the service of the Lord our God, I

ask you to receive our brother Apostle, a sinner who is born again, a sinner who is wash in the blood of Christ and has choosing the path of righteousness."[75]

Barabbas who is renamed Noah after the baptism was caught stealing and nearly got torn to pieces by a street crowd but Lazarus rescued him. Thus the boy is not converted to Christianity at heart and he quickly shows the meaninglessness of the conversion imposed on him. After the service he fails to walk through the flames designed to test his faith. The entire service is watched by some of the interpreters who all along are skeptical of Lazarus and in this respect they contrast sharply with members of the congregation who believe every word uttered by Lazarus.

A university community is exposed in The Interpreters and the comments are directed particularly at Nigerians among whom is Professor Oguazor. The setting of Professor Oguazor's character is the inside of his house which is decorated with artificial plants and flowers:

> From the ceiling hung citrous clusters of invisible wires. A glaze for the warmth of life and succulence told the story, they were the same as the artificial apples. There were fancy beach-hat flowerpots on the wall, ivy clung from these along a picture rail, all plastic, and the ceiling was covered in plastic lichen. Sagoe had passed, he now noticed, under a special exhibition group of one orange, two pears, and a fan of bananas straight from European wax-works.[76]

The general attitude of Professor Oguazor is rigid, like the decor in his room and he is always conscious of his appearance. But there is another side to Oguazor which is more real than the public image. His moral record is not straight as he has

had a child out of wedlock[77] but he expresses great moral indignation about a single student who gets pregnant.

The theme of duality is expressed in a number of different ways in the early works and generally, because exposure of pretentions is involved, a tone of social or political criticism tends to predominate. Professor Eldred D. Jones has made a remark which summarizes in a satisfactory way, the effect of Soyinka's works on the audience about which he writes:

> Soyinka is apt to raise the most embarrassing questions. This is where his greatest value lies--and his greatest personal danger; he is an irritant to complacency and a wet blanket to romance.[78]

3. The Ogboni Cult, Sacrifices and Recurrence.

In Yorubaland every divinity has a system of worship which is observed by its followers; such a system is called a cult; and some of these are very elaborate.[79] Cults are also organised for the worship of ancestors such as the Engungun Cult.[80]

The Ogboni Cult is considered separately from the Yoruba pantheon of divinities partly for convenience[81] but also because some myths claim that it existed before the divinities came down to earth. Idowu suggests that the Ogboni Cult was established by Oduduwa[82] who like Orisha-nla was a divinity close to Olodumare. But this myth is not conclusive and Oduduwa is generally considered by the Yoruba as their original ancestor and priest-king of Ille-Ife.[83]

Peter Morton-Williams[84] stresses the separation between the Ogboni Cult and the Yoruba pantheon of divinities and to some extent Idowu agrees with this view.[85] Peter Morton-Williams bases his article on a myth which says that the earth was created before the divinities came down from heaven, but Idowu describes another myth which associates the creation of the earth with Orisha-nla who is said to have been commissioned by Olodumare to spread soil on the primeval marsh until it became firm ground.[86]

The important point about the separation of the Ogboni Cult from the Yoruba pantheon of divinities is that a rivalry exists between them, a point on which Idowu and Peter Morton-Williams agree and this rivalry is of importance in the study of Madmen and Specialists. For the purpose of this thesis, the nature of the Ogboni Cult as described by Peter Morton-Williams has been adopted.

The Ogboni Cult is a secret organisation to which old men and a few selected old women are admitted in full membership.[87] The cult worships the earth because it believes in a myth that claims earth to be the origin of everything. Peter Morton-Williams describes the secret of the Ogboni Cult as follows:

> The secret of the Ogboni which has been closely guarded from other uninitiated Yoruba as well as from outside inquiry is that they worship and control the sanctions of the earth as a spirit. Earth, they hold, existed before the gods and the Ogboni cult before Kingship. Earth is the mother to whom the dead return. Earth and the ancestors, not the gods, are the source of moral law.[88]

The Old Women associated with the Ogboni Cult are generally looked upon as witches and dangerous. Peter Morton-Williams quotes a description of the Ogboni old women written by Leo Frobenius[89] who says that they were: "Well versed in the most arduous and wicked arts, whose business was spying and eavesdropping and, if called upon, handing the poisoned cup to the destined person."[90] The Old Women are associated with death by poisoning because the Ogboni Cult participates in the administration of justice. If a dispute arises between two people or if they have been involved in a fight which leads to the shedding of blood[91] the Ogboni cult officials send out an edan[92] summoning the parties to a trial. The use of a poisoned cup is a way of testing the validity of evidence but some people do not survive the concoctions.[93] The Ogboni Cult is also associated with burial rites and because of the secrecy they maintain, the community is generally afraid of them. The Egungun Cult is controlled by the Ogboni Cult and like everything else in the latter cult it is shrouded in mystery.[94]

The offering of sacrifices is central to Yoruba worship of all cults and a wide range of things are used--foods, drink as well as living things. The sacrificial meal of Orisha-nla is "the bloodless snail cooked in shea-butter." But the priests add fowls and other animals for their own benefit. Other divinities have their particular dishes--rat and fish for Orunmila, ram for Shango, dog for Ogun, a cock for Eshu.[95]

The highest form of sacrifice however, is human sacrifice and Idowu comments on this point in these words:

> The highest type of sacrifice among the Yoruba used to be human sacrifice. No one can be quite sure that this sacrifice is not being offered, if secretly and only on urgent occasions even these days, although after the establishment of British rule in the country, it was made illegal. In the old days, human sacrifice by the Yoruba was the climax of sacrifices.[96]

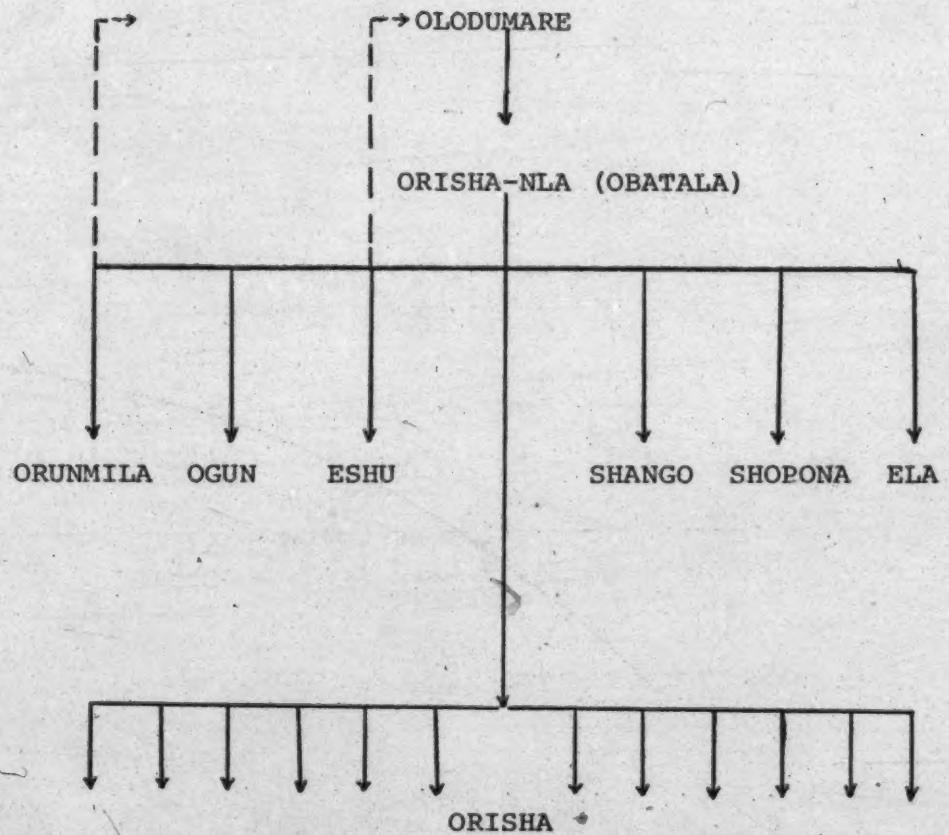
J. O. Lucas supports Idowu's view of human sacrifice among the Yoruba people and emphasizes its religious significance:

> Cannibalism does not exist in Yorubaland. When the Yorubas emerged into the light of civilisation, they had reached a stage of refinement which made cannibalism abhorrent to them. Traces of the practice however, survive, and these are found chiefly in connection with religious worship.[97]

In Madmen and Specialists, Soyinka uses the idea of sacrifice for a specific purpose[98] but the origin of his idea is clearly connected with Yoruba religion.

The idea of recurrence which Soyinka uses in Madmen and Specialists in the concept of "As" is echoed in all aspects of Yoruba existence. Life itself is cyclic, from birth through maturity, old age, death and then rebirth. Re-birth is explained in at least two ways; the return of an ancestor in the new born or the return of an Abiku child. An Abiku is a child born to die and the chain of its recurrence is broken through the appropriate rituals and sacrifices.[99] Gerald Moore explains the Yoruba idea of recurrence in two ways; first through a myth of a snake eating its own tail and secondly through the growth and decay of the vegetation in the equitorial forests:

> Under the high canopy of the equitorial forest, there are no seasons. In an atmosphere always moist, still and separate from the outer world, life follows a perpetual unbroken cycle of growth, fulfilment and decay.[100]



Notes:

1. The diagram is based on E. B. Idowu's book, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief, Chapters 4-8.
2. The number of unnamed Orisha is uncertain. Idowu gives four different figures: 201, 1060, 1440 and 1700.
3. Orunmila and Eshu have direct access to Olodumare.

Figure 1 - The Yoruba Pantheon of Divinities.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

[1]E. Bolaji Idowu, Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), assorted chapters. This book is the main source from which ideas on Yoruba mythology have come. I am not dealing with details of all the myths; only those aspects that are directly relevant to the thesis have been collated from different chapters. The Yoruba pantheon of divinities, summarized in Figure I (p. 32), and the Ogboni cult which is discussed a little later in Chapter I are the relevant aspects. In Figure I, Orisha-nla is given a prominent place because he is considered a direct descendant of Olodumare, the equivalent of the Christian God but he does not control the other named divinities since they derive their powers directly from Olodumare. Eshu and Orunmila have direct access to Olodumare; the former as envoy between heaven and earth, the latter as controller of man's fate because he is the only one present when Olodumare breathes life into the moulded body of man. Summary of functions of the divinities: according to both Idowu and Soyinka.

Olodumare	The supreme divinity, equivalent to the Christian God, omnipotent, creator of everything, man and the divinities.
Orisha-nla (also Obatala)	Responsible for moulding the physical aspects of man.
Orunmila	Responsible for the fate of individuals through the IFA Cult, a system of divination.
Eshu	Envoy to Olodumare, also known as the trickster divinity. He reports directly to Olodumare and is feared by the other divinities and men for that reason.
Ogun	Artist divinity, concerned with making tribal markings and circumcision; also explorer, path-finder, divinity of war and patron of all workers of iron including motor mechanics.
Shango	Rides on lightning, divinity responsible for electricity.
Shopona	Elder brother to Shango, responsible for small-pox,a deadly killer. Through Shango and Shopona, Olodumare punishes human offenders; through Eshu, he punishes all.

Ela	Idowu says his functions are not very clear but he is considered to be the divinity responsible for earth and the other divinities pay him homage for using the earth. Ela would seem to be doing the same things as the Ogboni Cult but this point is not made very clear. For this reason, the Yoruba patheon of divinities is separated from the Ogboni Cult in this thesis.

[2]Ibid., p. 59.

[3]Ibid., p. 60.

[4]See footnote 1 above under summary for responsibilities of each divinity and note the position of Orishanla in relation to the rest.

[5]Spellings of the names of all the divinities have been standardized in the thesis after a system adopted by Ulli Beier in his book Yoruba Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). This system avoids numerous Yoruba accents and records the names as they are pronounced in Yoruba.

[6]Idowu., p. 73.

[7]Obotunde Ijimere, The Imprisonment of Obatala and Other Plays (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1966), p. 3. Cattle Egret is a white heron that picks ticks from cattle.

[8]See William Bascom, The Yoruba of South-western Nigeria (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. 70. In a few key sentences, Bascom says, "the babalawo, as they are known, are both diviners and priests of Ifa, the God of Divination [Bascom has elevated the system of worship to Orunmila into a god] and although they are distinguished from the 'doctors' or 'medicine men,' they also prepare charms and medicines. A babalawo consults Ifa by manipulating sixteen palm nuts, which form a large handful, and attempting to pick them all up in his right hand. If one nut remains in the left hand, he makes a double mark in wood dust on the divining tray; if two remain, he makes a single mark."

[9]Ijimere., pp. 37-38.

[10]Idowu., pp. 71-72.

[11]Ulli Beier, p. 27.

[12]Wole Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," The Morality of Art, ed., by D. W. Jefferson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 128.

[13]A reference to Obatala's functions as moulder of the human body. In his absence the work could not be carried out. However, it seems there is a little contradiction; if foetuses were made, then someone other than Obatala must have made them. The main point is that without Obatala children would not be born.

[14]This seems to be a Yoruba proverb explaining the powers of Eshu which are not subject to time so that he can do anything.

[15]Kola nut is used extensively in West Africa when people exchange greetings. It is considered a sign of welcome. The Kola nut is also used in worship to the Orisha and in Ifa divination.

[16]Ijimere, pp. 36-37.

[17]Ibid., p. 11.

[18]Soyinka, p. 126. See note 24 below for a comprehensive explanation.

[19]Wole Soyinka. Idanre and Other Poems. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 75. Palm wine is extracted from the palm tree. Idowu in Olodumare states that the palm tree was handed to Orisha-nla by Olodumare when he came to spread soil on the primeval marsh.

[20]Ijimere, p. 16.

[21]In Yoruba beliefs the left hand is associated with evil, the right with good.

[22]Ibid., pp. 43-44.

[23]Soyinka has been talking about the ancestors (the dead) and the unborn and the living.

[24]Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," p. 126. The "transitional gulf" Soyinka is talking about is a process of decision making on the part of an individual. He has himself been imprisoned twice because of his involvement in public affairs, first in about 1964 and then in 1968. The second imprisonment was because of his criticism of the Nigerian Civil War and the war is the subject of Madmen and Specialists. In the phrase "the negro as pure artistic intuition" Soyinka is making reference to a typical Senghor

remark; see Senghor's article, "African-Negro Aesthetics," Diogenes, No. 16. (Winter, 1956), p. 23.

[25]Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of Senegal at the present time, born in 1906, Léon Damas, born in 1912, Aimé Césaire born in 1913.

[26]Gerald Moore, Seven African Writers (Ibadan: O.U.P., 1962). See the introduction for comments on the policy of assimilation.

[27]David Diop, (born 1910), grew up in France. In 1947 he founded Présence Africaine in Paris.

[28]Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier ed., Modern Poetry From Africa (London: Penquin Books, 1963), p. 58.

[29]The term African Literature has not been defined. In 1962 and 1963 conferences were held in Kampala, Uganda and in Sierra Leone. On both occasions those concerned failed to agree on a definition. I am using the term to mean the literature written in English from about 1960, particularly by people who consider Africa their home.

[30]Abiola Irele "Négritude or Black Cultural Nationalism," The Journal of Modern African Studies (October, 1965), p. 346.

[31]Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier, see the introduction.

[32]Abiola Irele, "Négritude-Literature and Ideology," The Journal of Modern African Studies (December, 1965), p. 519. Abiola Irele is a Nigerian fluent in English as well as French. His balanced views on Négritude were acquired because of his direct access to French writers.

[33]David Rubadiri, "The Development of Writing in East Africa." Perspectives on African Literature ed., Christopher Heywood (Nairobi: Heineman, 1968), p. 149. Rubadiri says, "A boy wrote a poem because his whole literary tradition had moulded him to try and emulate the only literature that he had come in contact with. So people wrote like Keats and Wordsworth on roses and sunsets and moonshine . . .,"

[34]By 1960 modern African writers were attracting world attention but this was also the time many of the African countries were becoming independent states. The cause for protest was no longer there. African culture could develop as people wanted under independent African governments. In fact Senghor himself was among the new ruling class.

[35]Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, ed., African Writers Talking (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972). In their book they give dates for Anglophone African writers: Chinua Achebe (b. 1930), J. P. Clark (b. 1935), Cyprian Ekwensi (b. 1921), Ezekiel Mphahlele (b. 1919), James Ngugi (b. 1938), Okot p'Bitek (b. 1930), Wole Soyinka (b. 1935), and Christopher Okigbo (1932-1967) who was killed in the Nigerian Civil War while fighting on the side of Biafra. Biafra was declared an independent republic but the Federal forces won the war and the country is still united.

[36]Janheinz Jahn, Neo-African Literature, A History of Black Writing (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968), pp. 243-244.

[37]Walter A. E. Skurnik, "Léopold Sédar Senghor and African Socialism." The Journal of Modern African Studies (October, 1965), pp. 350-351.

[38]Ibid., p. 350.

[39]Léopold Sédar Senghor, "The Study of African Man," Mawazo (December, 1968), p. 3.

[40]Abiola Irele, "Negritude or Black Cultural Nationalism," p. 343. Abiola does not mention the Organisation of African Unity by name but that is what he is really talking about.

[41]In his attitude to Africa, Senghor's ideas are different from Mphahlele who often talks of Africa South of the Sahara, thus excluding the Arab part of Africa. Mphahlele was almost the leader of anti-négritude feeling in English-speaking Africa. See his comments on the poetry of négritude in his book: Ezekiel Mphahlele, Voices in the Whirlwind (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 137. His interpretation of Senghor's poem "New York" is too literal; he does not look at the poem in terms of imagery.

[42]Wole Soyinka, "The Writer in a Modern African State," The Writer in Modern Africa, ed., Per Wästberg (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968), p. 17.

[43]This suggests reference to negro slaves working on cotton fields of Southern United States.

[44]This is the point Soyinka is making with his theory of the Ogun duality. It applies to all human beings.

[45]Margaret Laurence, Long Drums and Cannons (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 11. The unpublished plays are, The Invention, The Detainee and Camwood on the Leaves.

[46]See publication dates in the Bibliography.

[47]Madmen and Specialists was first published in 1971.

[48]Ezeokoli, p. 27. She quotes Gerald Moore who was assessing the possible effects of solitary confinement on Soyinka. Moore said, "It is probable . . . that it will [the confinement] always be seen as marking a definite break in his career, both as a writer and as a man of the theatre." Ezeokoli implicitly agrees with Moore's speculation but she is wrong in her assessment of Madmen and Specialists as Soyinka's departure from his usual style.

[49]Soyinka was specifically talking about Nigeria in the sense that the play was written for Nigeria's independence. But the ideas apply to other situations as well.

[50]John Ferguson "Nigerian Drama in English," Modern Drama (May, 1968), p. 24.

[51]Wole Soyinka, Five Plays (London: O.U.P., 1964), p. 1. This volume contains the following plays: A Dance of the Forests, The Lion and the Jewel, The Swamp Dwellers, The Trials of Brother Jero and The Strong Breed. All quotations on these plays are from this edition and subsequently I shall mention the specific plays, but the pages will be given as they are.

[52]Soyinka, "The Fourth Stage," p. 125.

[53]Soyinka, A Dance of the Forests, p. 51.

[54]Ibid., p. 57.

[55]Ibid., p. 62.

[56]Sir Rex Niven, The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 (Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 1970), p. 83.

[57]Kwame Nkrumah, Consciencism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964).

[58]Ibid., subtitle to the book.

[59]Ibid., p. 109.

[60]Ibid., p. 113.

[61]Ali A. Mazrui, "Nkrumah: the Leninist Czar," On Heroes and Uhuru-Worship, (London: Longmans, 1967), p. 113.

[62]Wole Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest (Ibadan: O.U.P., 1967), p. 1.

[63]Ibid., p. 13.

[64]Soyinka, The Trials of Brother Jero, pp. 201-202.

[65]Chume needs a marriage councillor and not a prophet.

[66]Soyinka, The Strong Breed, p. 275.

[67]Soyinka, The Lion and the Jewel, p. 93.

[68]A payment made by the groom to the father-in-law.

[69]Ibid., p. 99.

[70]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[71]Ibid., p. 144.

[72]Wole Soyinka, The Interpreters (London: (Andre Deutsch, 1965), p. 77.

[73]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[74]Ibid., p. 99.

[75]Ibid., p. 171.

[76]Ibid., p. 140.

[77]Ibid., p. 149.

[78]Eldred D. Jones, "The Essential Soyinka," Introduction to Nigerian Literature ed. Bruce King (Lagos: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1972), p. 114.

[79]William Bascom, IFA Divination (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969). This book is a very detailed account of Ifa Cult.

[80]The dead man is enacted by a member of the Ogboni Cult.

[81]The Ogboni Cult could not be represented in Figure 1 (p. 32) because the pantheon of divinities makes a unified group.

[82]Idowu, p. 24. Another writer, J. O. Lucas has pointed out that Oduduwa was wife to Obatala. See J. O. Lucas, The Religion of the Yorubas (Lagos: C.M.S. Bookshop, 1948), p. 94.

[83]Idowu, p. 20. To the Yoruba people Ille-Ife is the place where Orisha-nla sprinkled the first soil; hence the cradle of everything on earth. The University of Ife is in Ille-Ife.

[84]Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Ogboni cult in Oyo," Africa, xxx (October, 1960), p. 366.

[85]Idowu, p. 24.

[86]Ibid., p. 19.

[87]Peter Morton-Williams, p. 368.

[88]Ibid., p. 364.

[89]Frobenius was a famous German scholar in the early 20th Century and he visited Ille-Ife.

[90]Ibid., p. 368.

[91]Ibid., p. 366.

[92]Ibid., opposite p. 370 for illustrations. An Edan consists of two human figures, male and female joined together with a chain.

[93]This method of testing evidence is used in Malawi where the concoctions are called mwavi.

[94]Ibid., p. 371.

[95]Idowu, p. 118. "Shea-butter is from shea tree nuts."

[96]Ibid., p. 119.

[97]J. O. Lucas, p. 218.

[98]Below, p. 62.

[99]J. O. Lucas, p. 149.

[100]Gerald Moore, The Chosen Tongue, (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 135 (snake symbol) and p. 75 (the equitorial forest).

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURES AND YORUBA MYTHOLOGY IN MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

Ezeokoli[1] has pointed out the experimental nature of Soyinka's drama in "form and language" but the experimentation is not confined to the two areas, it is also present in the structures. Two structures are examined in this chapter: the physical structure in which the play is divided into "scenes" and the dream structure which shows the arrangement of ideas in the play. But as the Ogun duality has indicated,[2] the ideas in Soyinka's plays are rooted in Yoruba mythology. The dream structure and Yoruba mythology are used as instruments for analysing ideas in Madmen and Specialists. The physical structures of the early published plays and of the novel are briefly reviewed as an introduction to the present discussion.

Soyinka does not use the term "act" for the divisions in his plays and the term "scene" is specifically used only in The Trials of Brother Jero which has five scenes. The first scene is a prologue in which Brother Jero introduces himself to the audience, the second is at Brother Jero's hut early in the morning, the third is the beach scene later the same morning, the fourth goes back to Brother Jero's hut late in the afternoon and the fifth returns to the beach at nightfall. The events are realistic and the scenes are constructed

within "real time." In between the scenes time is allowed for the characters to travel from one point to the next.

The term "scene" is not used in The Lion and the Jewel but again "real time" is used and the three "scenes" are called Morning, Noon and Night.

In The Swamp Dwellers, the events take place in the hut of an old couple, Makuri and his wife Alu. First they discuss their children, particularly their younger son, Igwezu who is plagued with a chain of misfortunes. At the beginning of the play, Igwezu is talked about but he does not appear on the stage until towards the end.

A mysterious blind beggar is the first character to join the couple and after a few minutes the Kadiye, priest to the serpent of the swamps arrives and Igwezu is the last to appear. The Swamp Dwellers is a continuous series of arrivals all working towards the confrontation between the Kadiye and Igwezu. The arrivals do not change the play's thought or action, thus it is a one-act without scenes.

The Strong Breed is structured like The Swamp Dwellers although the locale changes from Eman's hut to the rest of the village; then into the forest and finally to the river. But all the events add up to the climax, the death of Eman at the end of the play.

Soyinka has settled for a two-part division in the novel, The Interpreters and the full length plays--A Dance of the Forests, The Road, Kongi's Harvest and Madmen and Specialists. The parts have been structured in such a way that an

intermission is called for at the end of Part I when the plays are produced. A Dance of the Forests was first produced in 1960 and the latest of the published play, Madmen and Specialists, was first produced in 1970[3] and over this ten year period Soyinka has made use of the two-part division. This might indicate that the method has become part of his permanent style.

The two part division causes no problems in reading the full length plays, but when a detailed examination is undertaken, the system does not function very adequately. A break down into smaller units, the "scenes" becomes necessary in order to facilitate references.

1. Physical Structure

Madmen and Specialists is divided into thirty-one scenes; of these nineteen are in Part I, numbered consecutively 1.1, 1.2 up to 1.19 and twelve are in Part II, numbered consecutively 2.1 to 2.12. Thus in making references to the play there is no need to specify the parts.

The divisions are based on four criteria:

(a) The entrance of new characters as between scenes 1.1 and 1.2. The arrival of Si-Bero is a new event as the Mendicants stop everything they have been doing and a new tone of voice is noticeable in them:

(b) Change of activity as between scenes 1.3 and 1.4. In scene 1.3, the Mendicants are involved in a ritual but in scene 1.4 they revert to normal speech.

(c) Change of thought as between scenes 1.4 and 1.5. In scene 1.4, the Mendicants discuss Si Bero and without warning the conversation switches to Bero.

(d) Dissolve scenes as between scenes 2.8 and 2.9 and then 2.11 and 2.12. These have been called dissolve scenes because they are cinematic. The script calls for an on-going scene to freeze and action starts on the next scene instantaneously. The thought in the frozen scene may continue to the subsequent scene under different characters as between scenes 2.8 and 2.9; 2.9 and 2.10, or a completely different scene may be interposed and the thought may be resumed in another scene. For example scenes 2.10 and 2.12 are part of the same chant, "Practice!" but the interposing scene 1.11 shows the two Earth Mothers and their concern is different from the chant. Soyinka has used the method of "dissolve scenes" in other plays. In The Lion and the Jewel there is a mime scene in which the arrival of a photographer to the village of Chief Baroka is remembered and acted out. Another example is the Court of Mata Kharibu in A Dance of the Forests. In either of the two examples the action of the play is frozen in order to accommodate the flash backs.

The scene divisions in Madmen and Specialists are shown in a tabular form and the following abbreviations have been used:

Abbreviations for Column Headings

Scene Number = Sc. No., Pages = pp, Beginning and

end lines = B&E lines, Characters = Chars, Main Events and Information = ME&I. It is necessary to indicate as far as possible the first few words of lines at the beginning of a scene and the last few words at the end of a scene because most scenes end in the middle of the page so that a page reference by itself is not adequate. Some of the scenes begin or end with words of the stage directions and in the abbreviations, the stage directions are treated like characters. The letters "SD" stand for stage directions.

However, where the stage directions precede words of an important character (e.g., the first words of Aafaa in scene 1.1, words of the character have been preferred.

Abbreviations for Characters and Other Information

The Mendicants, collectively - Mend. Individually, Aafaa = AF, Blindman = BM, Cripple = CR, Goyi = GY. The term used for the Old Women is Earth Mothers = EM, Individually, Iya Agba = IA, Iya Mate = IM, Bero = B, Si Bero = SB, Old Man = OM, Priest = PR.

TABLE I

No comments.

TABLES II to IV

Tables II to IV are provided for quick and easy reference to the play. Example: The Priest appears only in scene 1.17: the scene number is given under Priest in Table II. To locate the scene in the script refer to Table I for the page number.

TABLE I

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE IN MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
1.1	7- 8	AF: Six and four . . . you. AF: We will . . . the pennies	MEND.	(a) Dice game (b) Dance
1.2	9-10	SB: Don't try that . . . remember? SB: And eat . . . together.	MEND., SB	AF/SB conflict
1.3	10-12	CR: God . . . Si Bero. Chorus: (of MEND) Hear . . . said sir.	MEND.	(a) Cruelty game one with GY as victim (b) AF addresses audience
1.4	12	GY: Oh, . . . spying AF: With the . . . goodness.	MEND.	SB discussed
1.5	13-14	CR: I still . . . up to. CR: Yes, . . . results?	MEND.	B discussed

TABLE I (continued)

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
1.6	14-16	AF: Does it . . . Man. SD: They . . . singing.	MEND.	Cruelty game two GY tortured with needle
1.7	16	CR: Are we . . . work. SD: The others . . . dice.	MEND., SB	(a) Dice game (b) AF spies
1.8	16-18	IM: A-ah, . . . daughter. SD: The . . . furious.	EM., MEND. SB	(a) Berries (b) Joint EM/MEND. dance
1.9	18-19	SB: Stop . . . entertainment? SD: She . . . the house.	MEND., SB	(a) SB/AF conflict (b) BM helps SB
1.10	19-20	AF: Did . . . that? SB: Your . . . sorted out	MEND. without BM	SB discussed
1.11	20-22	AF: Yes, we know. CR: Oh, . . . Come on.	MEND., SB	Cruelty game three Execution game SB present.

TABLE I (continued)

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
1.12	22-23	SD: They settle down SD: Somewhat . . . Bero.	MEND., SB B arrives	(a) AF/BM fight (b) AF/CR trial of strength in a fight
1.13	23-27	B: Was that . . . house? SD: IM joins . . . reunion.	MEND., B	B's power assertion
1.14	27-28	SB: Bero! Bero! SD: B . . . watches him.	EM., SB., B	B/SB cold re-union
1.15	29-30	IA: Well, . . . think? SD: She . . . a while.	EM	B assessed
1.16	30-32	SB: They told . . . them SB: They held . . . me.	B., SB	B's power theory SB's pledges to EM
1.17	32-35	PR: A-ah, . . . are we. SD: They watch . . . flight.	Priest., B., SB	(a) OM discussed (b) Cannibalism story

TABLE I (continued)

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
1.18	35-37	SB: You know . . . you. B: There . . . same?	B., SB., MEND.	(a) "As" mentioned (b) Power in Cannibalism
1.19	37-40	AF: Certainty not, sir. SD: Lights fade slowly.	MEND., B., SB., OM	(a) "As" again (b) Dance (c) OM appears
2.1	41-45	AF: "As" is Acceptance . . . AF: That's . . . for you.	MEND., OM	(a) Dice game (b) Alphabet game (c) CR's dream
2.2	45-46	BM: Isn't . . . food? AF: Leave that to us	MEND., OM	AF's dominance of OM--torture
2.3	46-52	B: I thought . . . dinner. SD: They continue to eat.	MEND., OM., B	(a) Meal starts. (b) B/OM conflict (c) Alphabet game ends with humanity
2.4	52-53	B: What is it . . .? B: Forfeited. . . .	B., SB	(a) EM demand dues (b) MEND. Song I

TABLE I (continued)

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
2.5	53-56	OM: I should . . . better SD: IA leans out. . . .	MEND., OM	(a) Meal ends (b) Singing and dancing
2.6	56-58	IA: Does the specialist . . .? IA: What will . . . somewhere.	IA., B	(a) Nature of EM (b) B's chance for salvation
2.7	58-60	CR: On his arm. . . . SD: As the tempo. . . .	MEND., OM	(a) Song from (2.5) (b) Song 2
2.8	60-66	B: So you . . . tricks. OM: Tell me. . . .	MEND., OM B	(a) "As" defined (b) B's illusion exposed by OM
2.9	67	IA: Abuse! . . . nothing? IA: There is . . . mine.	EM	"Retribution" prepared
2.10	68-74	CR: I want . . . dues. SD: Aafaa . . . next scene.	MEND., OM	(a) Decoration mime (b) Long speeches

TABLE I (continued)

Sc. No.	PP	B&E LINES	Chars	ME & I
2.11	74-76	SD: IA, . . . ground. SD: She raises. . . .	EM., SB., B	B's dilemma
2.12	76-77	OM: Practice!. . . . MEND: Bi o ti wa. . . .	MEND., OM., B., SB., EM.	(a) Hut burns. (b) OM shot (c) Cripple dies (d) Play "Ends" in mid-word.

TABLE II

PART I, 19 SCENES

Chars.	Scenes Chars. Appear	Totals
MEND	1-13 and 19	14
BM	9	1
OM	19	1
B	12-14; 16-19	7
SB	2, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 & 16-19	10
EM	8, 14, 15	3
PR	17	1

TABLE III

PART II, 12 SCENES

Chars.	Scenes Chars. Appear	Totals
MEND	1-3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12	8
OM	1-3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12	8
B	3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12	6
SB	4, 11, 12	3
EM	9, 11, 12	3
IA	6	1

TABLE IV

PARTS I AND II

Chars.	Part I	Part II	Totals
MEND	14	8	22
BM	1	-	1
OM	1	8	9
B	7	6	13
SB	10	3	13
EM	3	3	6
IA	-	1	1
PR	1	-	1

Further Examples to Use of Tables

In Table II, the Blindman is separated from the other Mendicants and the table makes his isolation obvious. This is the scene where Si Bero takes him into the hut. In scene 2.6 Iya Agba is separated from Iya Mate for the first and only time in the play in a scene where she offers assistance to Bero. Si Bero's role in Part II is far less important than in Part I and to some extent Table IV suggests this.

DREAM STRUCTURE AND YORUBA MYTHOLOGY AS TOOLS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF IDEAS IN MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

2. A Comparison of Structures in The Marriage and Madmen and Specialists

Soyinka uses the idea of a dream in handling characters and ideas in Madmen and Specialists but the dream idea is not obvious and in order to show its existence, it is

necessary to start with simpler examples.

The Marriage, a play written by Witold Gombrowicz (Polish writer 1904-1969) and A Dance of the Forests are starting points. The Marriage is about Henry's dream and through it he creates the other characters. Thus the personality of Henry explains the dream and the dream explains his personality. Henry dreams about things and people that occupy his mind most of the time; hence the four most important characters of his creation are the Father, the Mother, Johnny and Molly and these are the closest to him. Henry's secret thought is to be king and within the dream he becomes one by an act of will. Similarly he makes his Father king but because there is a secret animosity between them he overthrows the Father. The point about the dream is that it brings out to the surface the hidden cravings of Henry.

For our purposes, the freedom with which Henry operates within the play is important. The laws of normal logic are suspended and events are accepted because a dream exists and they exist within it.

Henry's dream has a specific cause, physical discomfort, which Johnny, Henry's alter ego talks about when he says, "That stew they give us for supper is pretty tough and indigestible. I have nightmares too sometimes . . ."[4]

In Madmen and Specialists, Soyinka is the dreamer, in a poetic sense, and the play is his dream. Through the Ogun duality, which is poetic vision in this case, Soyinka

has acquired knowledge of human nature and the Nigerian Civil War is a specific event which activates the dream. Like Henry, Soyinka controls the dream and although the characters have separate identities, Soyinka is free to co-exist with them whenever he desires. The idea of co-existence between the dreamer and his creation has been touched on by Gombrowicz:

> Henry resembles an artist in the state of inspiration rather than a person who dreams. Everything in the play creates "itself": Henry creates a dream and the dream creates Henry, the action of the play creates itself, people create one another, and the whole pushes forward towards unknown solutions.[5]

The mutual creation between the dreamer/artist and the characters of his creation effaces any distinctions that may exist at the beginning of the play and the dream is the centre of attention.

Towards the end of Madmen and Specialists, and in particular in the long speeches, the idea that is repeated over and over again is the nature of man expressed through the concept of "As." At this point in the play, the characters and Soyinka become one in expressing the central idea. The Marriage "pushes towards solutions" however unknown they might be but Madmen and Specialists does not even attempt to suggest solutions because the nature of man, according to Soyinka, remains unchanged throughout human history and hence the connection between the circle and "As."

The structure in The Marriage is diagramatically represented in Figure 2 (p. 63) which suggests that the

actions in the play develop in a lineal direction, unrestricted by the structure which is open. This makes it possible for the play to follow any parallel path in a forward direction but these actions can be terminated at any point. Thus actions can develop freely according to the wishes of the playwright.

In Figure 3 (p.64) the situation is much more complex since two major levels of the dream exist, the permanent poetic dream which Soyinka has acquired because he is a sensitive creative artist and the immediate dream which is activated by the Nigerian Civil War. Both levels of the dream lead to the "As" circle. The play is, strictly speaking, part of the immediate dream but it has characters who have separate existences outside the play and they too bring ideas of their own, some of which can be explained through knowledge of the Yoruba myths.[6] But because they are human beings,[7] their actions also lead to the "As" circle. A reasonable background of Soyinka's philosophy and of Yoruba myths is necessary in order to understand some of the ideas.

SUMMARY OF DREAM STRUCTURES IN THE MARRIAGE AND MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

The Marriage

1. The Marriage has one level only and it is centered on Henry who controls all the other characters.

Structural Audience: There is no structural audience in

The Marriage as the characters exist in their world and are not conscious of any other people.

Madmen and Specialists

Three levels of the dream exist:

1. The permanent poetic dream derived from the poet's inherent knowledge of human nature.

2. The immediate dream, also poetic but specifically activated by the Nigerian Civil War.

3. The Play. This is made up of the actions of the characters, closely linked to the immediate dream but possessing a measure of independent existence.

Structural Audience: The Mendicants are conscious of an audience at times to which they relate directly. This audience is part of the structure of the play.

3. Dream Structure in A Dance of the Forests and Yoruba Mythology as Tools to the Concept Of Cannibalism in Madmen and Specialists

A Dance of the Forests is a poetic dream in which man's nature in the past, the present and the future is seen to be unchanging, a theme which is explained by the reincarnation of the Dead Man and the Dead Woman and the existence of the Half-Child[8] on the one hand and the attitudes of the three human characters on the other. They are Demoke, the artist, Rola, the whore and Adenebi, the corrupt court clerk. The three are confronted by Forest Head, the divinity of

creation; hence Obatala's[9] counterpart, who reminds them of their criminal activities. The purpose of the confrontation is to "torture awareness" out of them and Forest Head makes this point clear in the following speech:

> Trouble me no further. The fooleries of beings whom I have fashioned closer to me weary and distress me. Yet I must persist, knowing that nothing is ever altered. My secret is my eternal burden--to piece the encrustations of soul-deadening habit, and bare the mirror of original nakedness--knowing full well, it is all futility. Yet I must do this alone, and no more, since to intervene is to be guilty of contradiction, and yet to remain altogether unfelt is to make my long-rumoured ineffectuality complete; hoping that when I have tortured awareness from their souls, that perhaps only perhaps, in new beginnings (Italics mine).[10]

Only the artist Demoke shows awareness of soul since he confesses the part he played in the death of his apprentice. Rola and Adenebi either deny or justify their bad deeds.[11]

In Madmen and Specialists the purpose of the cannibalism story is similar to what Forest Head has said. The Old Man is the divinity of creation in the play since, like Obatala, he is associated with the colour white[12] and his patience in suffering is similar to Obatala's. In Part I, the Old Man is confined[13] to the cellar and in Part II he is tortured mentally and physically by the Mendicants and Bero.[14] The Story of his duties at the recuperation centre[15] is equivalent to an act of creation because by giving the Mendicants a new direction in life he had salvaged them from imminent annihilation. The four Mendicants--the Cripple, Goyi (the hunchback), the Blindman and Aafaa (the epileptic)[16] in their respective deformities are further evidence of the

Old Man's identity with Obatala.[17]

In the analysis of the dream structure in Madmen and Specialists, we have seen that the immediate dream was activated by the Nigerian Civil War which Soyinka has described as "stupid and unnecessary."[18] His anti-war feelings are expressed largely[19] through the cannibalism story. The Old Man, as Obatala, is central to the story and through him a tone of protest against the senseless slaughter at the front is introduced in the play. In scene 1.17, the Priest states that the Old Man went to the front to legalize cannibalism and to prevent the wastage of "meat." In his own words, the Priest says:

> I knew it. A stubborn man, once he gets hold of an idea. You won't believe it but he actually said to me, I'm going to try and persuade those fools not to waste all that meat. Mind you he never could stand wastage, could he? I remember he used to wade into you both[20] if he caught you wasting anything. But human flesh, why, that's another matter altogether (p. 34).[21]

The point about the Priest's statement is that it is made by a civilian and intended mainly for the public which is represented by Si Bero[22] at this point. The public is as fully informed about the horrors of war as possible through a "shock technique." The freedom of the dream structure permits Soyinka to co-exist with the Priest in this scene.

The "eating" of human flesh is handled like a religious ceremony presided over by the Old Man as Obatala. The Old Man is also associated with "As."[23] Bero describes the scene on the occasion the "eating" took place in the following

words:

> We thought it was a joke. I'll bless the meat, he said. And then--As Was the Beginning, As is, Now, As Ever shall be . . . world without. . . . We said amen with a straight face and sat down to eat. Then afterwards . . . (p. 36).

The theme of the meal is taken up again in a crucial scene when Aafaa winds up the alphabet recitation. The other Mendicants participate in the meal which is described as follows:

> Aafaa (dashes towards the food tray, opens the lid and sniffs) Inspiration! C, Contentment. A full belly (He starts to pick at the Old Man's food. The others join him, wolfing down huge chunks of meat. Aafaa gnaws at the huge bone). A full belly comes and goes; for half the people I know it never comes. H-Humanity! Humanity the Ultimate Sacrifice to As, the eternal oblation on the altar of As . . . (p. 52).

In Yoruba religion the highest sacrifice is human sacrifice[24] for the benefit of the community but in this passage the emphasis is placed on the physical gratification of individuals and because of that the meaning of sacrifice in a religious sense is reduced to mere cannibalism. This is shock technique Soyinka uses and the realistic description is intended to be nauseating.

4. Soyinka's Concept of Cannibalism From Random Sources

The word cannibal has been used by Soyinka in various places, and the intention in this section is to select a few examples in order to discover his concept of cannibalism.

In August 1962, Soyinka was interviewed by Lewis

Nkosi about his 1960 production of A Dance of the Forests. As the production developed, Soyinka began to see the play in a new light and this is how it struck him:

> . . . but the main thing was the realisation that human beings are just destructuve all over the world. I think this is it--I have thought about this again and again but during the production--I produced it myself--and in trying to see the play take shape on the stage. I find that the main thing is my own personal conviction or observation that human beings are simply cannibals all over the world so that their main preoccupation seems to be eating up one another. This I think is the main thing I would say was in the back of my mind when I wrote it (Italics mine).[25]

The word cannibal is used in a figurative sense in this passage. And in A Dance of the Forests it is again used figuratively by the Warrior who refuses to lead the army of Mata Kharibu in a war intended to retrieve the Queen's wardrobe. The Warrior addresses the Physician in these words:

> Unborn generations will be cannibals most worshipful Physician. Unborn generations, will, as we have done, eat up one another. Perhaps you can devise a cure, you who know how to cure so many ills. . . . (Italics mine).[26]

This passage is almost identical to the interview, but in the interview, Soyinka qualifies the "eating" aspect of cannibalism by the use of the word "seems." The qualification is an indication that he is talking about it in a figurative way. But the soldier's statement is anti-war and he does not qualify the phrase "eat up one another." In Madmen and Specialists, there is the same bluntness in the use of the word "eat" and the most nauseating passage is the Old Man's when he deliberately shocks Bero:

> Your faces, gentlemen, your faces. You should see your faces. And your mouths are hanging open. You're drooling but I am not exactly sure why. Is there really much difference? All intelligent animals kill only for food, you know, and you are intelligent animals. Eat-eat-eat-eat-eat-Eat! (p. 51).

The intention of the final shout in this passage is to shock and Bero leaves the room immediately after this statement.

In The Road, Samson uses the word cannibal to describe Sergeant Burma and he too is using the word as a shock technique. He has been trying to persuade Kotonu to resume driving but Kotonu is unwilling and so he says to him, "You haven't been to war. You cannot pretend to be an out-and-out cannibal like Sergeant Burma."[27]

Conclusion

The concept of cannibalism in Madmen and Specialists expresses Soyinka's anti-war feelings and the realistic descriptions are designed to shock. Like Forest Head in A Dance of the Forests, the shock technique is intended to raise consciousness and in Madmen and Specialists, the technique is directed at the Nigerian people, that element of the audience which is integral to the dream structure.

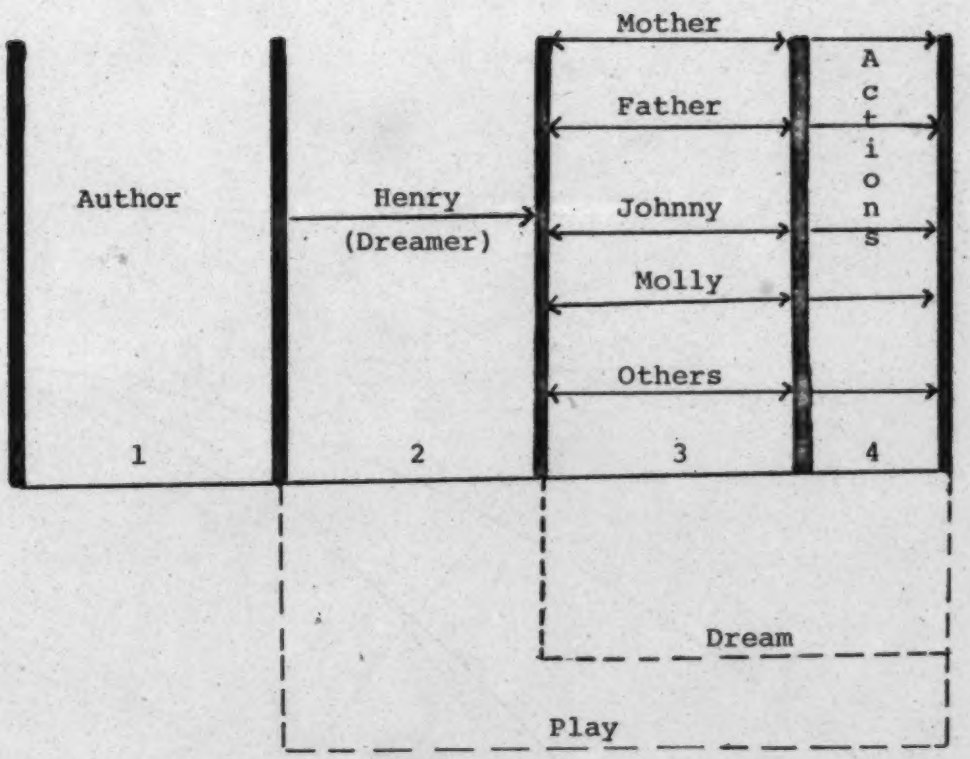


Figure 2 - Dream Structure, The Marriage

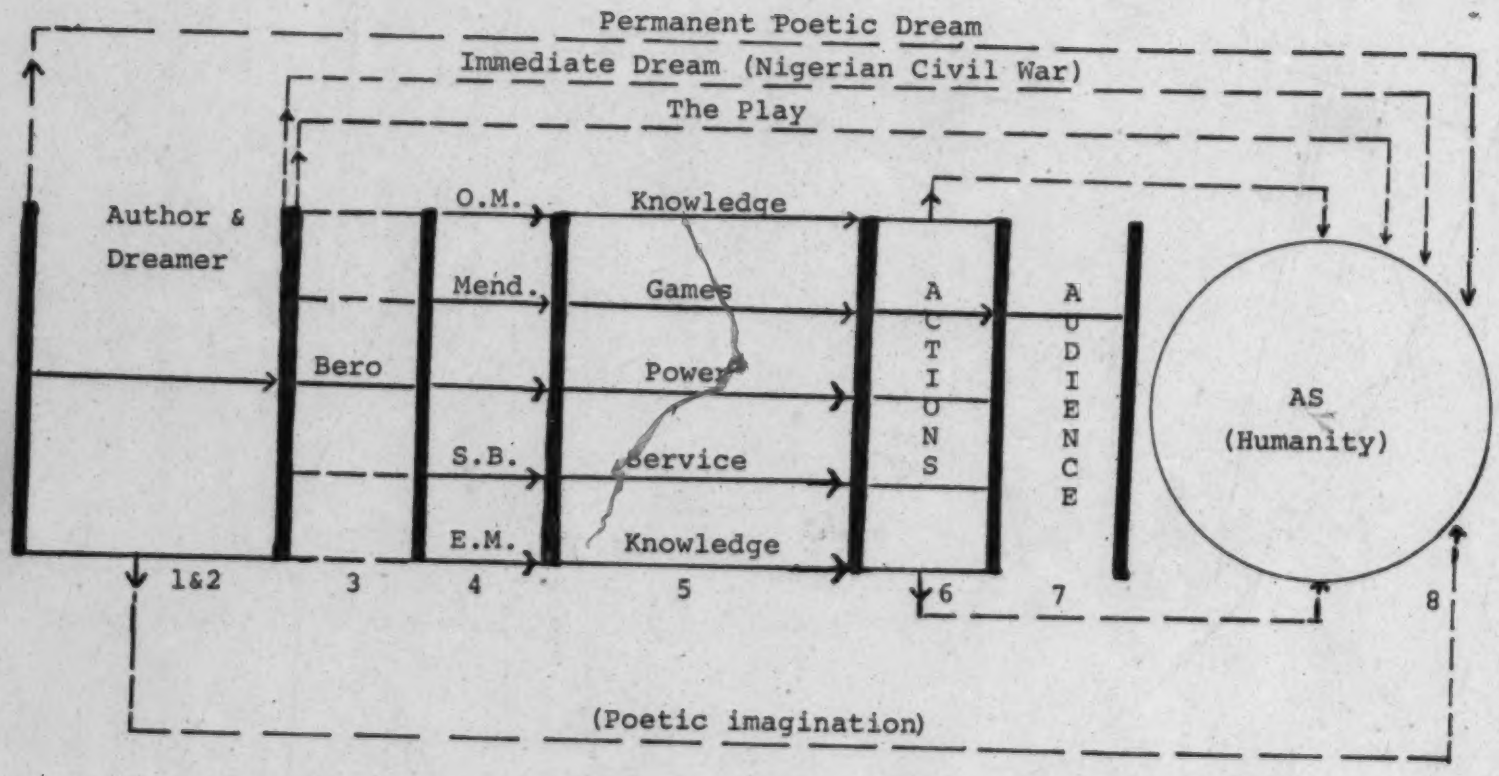


Figure 3 - Dream Structure, Madmen and Specialists

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

[1]Victoria C. Ezeokoli. "African Theatre: A Nigerian Prototype" (unpublished Ph.D. disertation, Yale University, 1972), p. 125.

[2]Above, p. 6.

[3]Madmen and Specialists, was first produced at the O'Neill Centre, Weterford, Connecticutt in 1970. Harper Publishing House has announced publication of a new work by Soyinka titled The Man Died. If it is a play, then Madmen and Specialists is no longer the latest published play.

[4]Witold Gombrowicz. The Marriage (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), p. 26.

[5]Ibid., p. 16.

[6]The parallel between the Mendicants and the deformed creatures of Obatala is an example.

[7]The Mendicants can partly be explained by Yoruba myths but they are also participants in the events of the play in which their actions reflect the nature of man.

[8]In Chapter I, p.31 the theme of recurrence has been discussed.

[9]Idowu, Olodumare, p. 71.

[10]Soyinka, A Dance of the Forests, p. 82.

[11]Ibid., pp. 14-28, for a full account of Forest Head's interrogation of Demoke, Rola and Adenebi.

[12]Above, p. 2.

[13]Compare the Old Man's confinement with Obatala's in Ijimere's play The Imprisonment of Obatala.

[14]The Mendicants taunt the Old Man over the cigarette, Aafaa withholds the watch and the glasses belonging to the Old Man and finally Bero denies paper etc. to the Old Man. Scenes 2.1-2.8 cover most of the events in question.

[15]The clearest statement about what happened at the recuperation centre is presented indirectly in Bero's last speech in scene 1.18 (p. 37) of Madmen and Specialists.

[16]Stage directions at the beginning of the play mention Aafaa's St Vitus Spasms which is equivalent to saying he is an epileptic. Goyi has a contraption supporting his back in a stooping posture. He looks like a hunchback.

[17]Idowu., Olodumare, p. 71.

[18]The New York Times, July 20, 1970.

[19]Soyinka also uses the Mendicants in various ways for protest purposes.

[20]The Priest is referring to Bero and Si Bero.

[21]Wole Soyinka, Madmen and Specialists, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 34. All subsequent quotations in the thesis are from this edition and they will not be footnoted. Page numbers will be given against each quotation.

[22]See her reaction to the rumours in scene 1.16 where she says, "We heard terrible things. So much evil. . . . (p. 30)".

[23]Above, p. 58.

[24]Above, p. 31.

[25]Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, African Writers Talking (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972), p. 173.

[26]Soyinka, A Dance of the Forests, p. 55.

[27]Soyinka, The Road (Ibadan: O.U.P., 1965), p. 20.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERACTION OF IDEAS IN THE DREAM STRUCTURE AND IN MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS

Figure 3 (p. 64) shows that the three levels of the dream structure converge in the "As" circle: an indication that ideas in each of the three levels relate to one another. The term dream structure in this chapter excludes the third level, the play, which is the subject of analysis.

Aspects of Yoruba mythology relevant to Madmen and Specialists have been discussed in Chapter I.[1] A description of the characters in the play is essential in order to complete the background to the analysis since what they do is partly explained by Yoruba mythology.

1. The Mendicants and the Earth Mothers

In Chapter II, the nature of the Old Man as Obatala has been discussed and the Mendicants are his votaries.[2] Soyinka uses the Mendicants, as a collective group, flexibly for expressing a variety of ideas through performances,[3] but for the moment the focus is on their separate identities.

Aafaa is leader of the group firstly because he is the priest,[4] hence master of ceremonies in the ritualistic games[5] and secondly because he is first in the alphabet.[6] He has the most to say of all the Mendicants, his mind grasps

things very quickly[7] and his observations on the others correctly define their personalities. He is a tireless and an accomplished actor.[8] He has a quick and fiery temper so that he clashes with every other character in the play, but he is physically weak.[9]

The Blindman comes second to Aafaa in the alphabet and the two men seem to be on the same intellectual level. Aafaa calls him "Blind Advocate" (p. 22), a remark which has a double meaning[10] but it seems to indicate that he is a lawyer by training. He probably speaks the fewest words in the play[11] but his speech is controlled and dignified. Aafaa calls the Cripple and Goyi dreamers (p. 44) but excludes the Blindman. In scene 1.6, he joins the Remu Acu Tetigisti chant but he does so "solemnly" (p. 14) presumably because he does not like inflicting pain. The fight with Aafaa in scene 1.12 shows that he is physically superior.[12]

The Cripple is a dreamer and an opportunist. His intention is to regain his limbs and he is willing to accomplish his aim by any means possible. His selfishness is defined in the dice game at the beginning of the play when he proposes to stake an eye which he has won from Aafaa in exchange for Goyi's left and right stumps which are won by Aafaa and the Blindman respectively. So, for one stake he hopes to win two. At first this might appear to be unimportant but in his dealings with Si Bero and Bero, he puts his interests first. He blesses Si Bero when she is within hearing distance in scene 1.3 but as soon as she

is far off, he joins the others in making sarcastic remarks about her brother. At the beginning of scene 1.9 he makes two conciliatory remarks to Si Bero which are typical of his double faced nature, "No offence Si Bero, no offence. We only thought you had forgotten us." And in the second remark he says, "So here we are Si Bero. Bring out the herbs and let us catch the smell of something in your kitchen while we are about it: (p. 18). His attitude to Bero is equally double faced, because like the other Mendicants, he raises doubts about Bero's behavior towards the Old Man and Si Bero in scene 1.5, but in the presence of Bero from scene 1.12 onwards, he is willing to go along with anything Bero wants.[13] Aafaa calls the Cripple an "illiterate reptile: (p. 68) and this observation explains why at the end of scene 2.5, he insists on mispronouncing the word "palpitating" as "gushpillating" in the song despite correction by the Blindman.

Goyi is the last alphabetically and he is the least intelligent. His longest speech in the play is in scene 2.1 where he repeats the Old Man's words spoken at the recuperation centre. The Old Man was talking about the world going round, a concept that the Mendicants seem to have found new,[14] and hence profound, but at the conclusion he turns the statement into a crude joke, "I said to myself, well, I suppose the Old Man must be right. I don't know what makes the world go round but I do know what goes around the world. It's wind. And I broke it loudly and felt better" (p. 42). The

Cripple refers to Goyi as a "nitwit" (p. 68) and Aafaa calls him "dumclod" (p. 14) and then talks to him like a child a little later in scene 1.6, "What's the matter? No wan' pee-pee? Pee-pee pee-pee? No more pee-pee? (p. 15).

The Mendicants are on the stage almost throughout (Tables II and III, p. 52), in very close touch with Si Bero, Bero and the Old Man, so that what they say or do has a great deal of meaning for the play. An understanding of what they are is a help but they do not always behave according to their natures because they are also performers and the shifts from being themselves to being performers can be swift and sometimes subtle.[15]

The Earth Mothers are followers of the Ogboni Cult and because the cult is a secret organisation, their statements are veiled in secrecy.[16] The term Earth Mothers suggests that they worship the earth and the description that Peter Morton-Williams gives of Ogboni women[17] in general answers to the Earth Mothers. Their close relationship to the earth is revealed in several comments such as the following, in which Iya Agba is addressing Bero, "Not any cult you can destroy. We move as the earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages" (p. 57).[18] Si Bero has been admitted to the cult by the Earth Mothers and Iya Agba discloses the information to Bero a few lines before the statement quoted immediately above. Si Bero's membership explains why she is so alarmed when she discovers that both Bero and her father had spilt blood at the front. The

scene in which the information is given to her is as follows:

Bero: I'm tired. Let's talk of something else

Si Bero: Oh yes, you must be. Come inside. No, wait. You musn't come in yet. Be patient now, Bero. (Hurrying into the house). Don't move from there. Stand still.

(Bero looks slowly round him, he gazes as if he is trying to pierce through the walls into neighbouring homes. The expression on his face is contempt).

(Si Bero reappears with a gourd of palm wine, pours it on the ground in front of the door-step. Then she moves to unlace his boots).

Bero: You still keep up these little habits.

Si Bero: I like to keep close to earth.

Bero: (Stepping back to prevent her from taking off his boots). Bare feet, wet earth. We've wetted your good earth with something more potent than that, you know.

Si Bero: Not you. Neither you nor Father. You had nothing to do with it. . . ."(Italics mine)(p. 28).

Si Bero is engaged in a ritual of pouring libation to the ancestral spirits with palm wine and they are closely associated with the Ogboni Cult.[19] The "something potent" which Bero talks about is blood and Si Bero is alarmed because spilling blood is forbidden by the Ogboni Cult as it is considered an act of profaning the earth. Peter Morton-Williams states, "The judicial function of Ogboni are concerned with the shedding of blood. To shed human blood upon the ground, whether the wound is slight or grave, except in sacrifice is to profane the Earth."[20]

In spite of the mystery surrounding the Earth

Mothers, their humanity is unmistakable in the play particularly in the last scenes as they discuss the idea of retribution.[21] Si Bero pleads for more time but Iya Agba cannot agree to this because she is also subject to death and she is very much concerned with time: "Time has run out. Do you think time favours us?" (p. 74). A similar argument is used in scene 2.9 when Iya Mate tries to intercede with Iya Agba on behalf of Si Bero, "And I? Have you spoken to the ones below[22] and did they tell you I shall still be among the living when her[23] bones are rested" (p. 67).

In Yoruba mythology, the conflict between followers of Obatala and of the Ogboni Cult is explained by the Obatala/Oduduwa confrontation[24] and in part, the hostile relationship between the Mendicants, in particular Aafaa, and Si Bero is because they belong to opposing camps.[25]

The end of the play[26] can also be explained by the Obatala/Oduduwa confrontation. Ezeokoli who missed this point found the "end" of the play puzzling[27] and perhaps the difficulty influenced her assessment of the play which she said is "the most un-African of Soyinka's plays. . . ."[28]

Ezeokoli did not realize that the Old Man was Obatala at that point in the play, so she was trying to find reasons why Bero had killed his father. The point is that the Old Man does not die, he is merely revealed as the divinity, Obatala. The clue to this explanation is in the association of the colour white with Obatala. The surgery is first described at the beginning of Part II in the stage directions

where the doctor's smock is described as white. At the end of the play there is no direct reference to the colour white but the Old Man wears the coat described earlier on. As in other parts of this play, stage directions[29] play a vital role here and in order to clarify the point, the words should be set down as they appear:

> (Aafaa snatches one of Goyi's crutches. In the background the sound of Bero breaking down the door. Aafaa brings down the crutch on the Cripple's head).
>
> OLD MAN: Stop him![30] Fire! Fire! Riot! Hot line! Armageddon!
>
> (As he shouts, the Old Man snatches the surgeon's coat from where it is hanging, puts it on, dons cap, pulls on the gloves and picks up a scapel).
>
> OLD MAN: (at the top of his voice) Bring him over here. (He dons mask). Bring him over here. Lay him out. Stretch him flat. Strip him bare. Bare! Bare! Bare his soul! Light the stove!
>
> (They heave him onto the table and hold him down while the Old Man rips the shirt open to bare the Cripple's chest. Bero rushes in and takes in the scene, raises his pistol and aims at Old Man).
>
> OLD MAN: Let us taste just what makes a heretic tick.
>
> (He raises the scapel in a motion for incision. Bero fires. The Old Man spins, falls face upwards on the table as the Cripple slides to the ground from under him)(p. 77).

The short sentences, "Stretch him flat" etc. suggest ritual rhythms and that is precisely what the Old Man is involved in. After the shot, the Old Man does not fall to the ground because he does not belong there, instead he faces upwards to Olodumare in a posture that suggests prayer and the white

coat finally identifies him as Obatala. The Cripple who is human and dead slips to the ground where he is to be buried along with his ancestors and the Ogboni Cult will look after his burial rites.[31]

2. The Mendicants as Performers

The Mendicants are performers for about three quarters of the time they are on the stage and more than fifty per cent of the remaining quarter in which they are themselves is confined to between scenes 1.1 and 1.13. Scenes 1.1 and 1.4 are the only two in the play which are solely devoted to the Mendicants as personalities. In scene 1.1, their qualities are set out in the dice game. Aafaa speaks the first words because of his leadership in the group, the Cripple's dream and opportunism are revealed, the Blindman's reasonableness and fairplay are shown in the way he allows Goyi to keep the stump until later on and Goyi, the least intelligent is the greatest loser.[32] In scene 1.4, only three of the Mendicants express opinions about Si Bero, the Cripple is silent. Their comments or reactions reflect what they are. Goyi who is incapable of original ideas only repeats the gossip of the village, "But everyone knows she's mad. They get that way after a while living alone" (p. 12). Goyi is repeating what public opinion says about the Ogboni old women.[33] On the other hand, the Blindman's intelligence and good judgement are contained in the rebuke he directs at Aafaa, "For the so-called chaplain you talk plenty of

nonsense" (p. 12). Aafaa's assessment of Si Bero as a witch, and particularly the allegation he makes that Si Bero pickles "foetuses" is surprising because it is out of character. However, the important point is that Aafaa's bluntness is revealed in the remark "Listen to the blind fool" (p. 12). It is this kind of bluntness that earns him a swagger-stick from Bero in scene 1.13.

As performers, the Mendicants do anything the playwright wants them to do--dancing, singing, miming, etc. and in fact the flexibility inherent in the dream structure[34] is best revealed through the Mendicants in Madmen and Specialists.

In this section, the intention is to give a few selected examples of how the Mendicants are used to articulate ideas through performance.

The cannibalism story has a number of realistic details that are intended to shock the audience,[35] and it is one way in which Soyinka protests against the Nigerian Civil War. The Mendicants are used for protest purposes in some of their performances and one of the most blatant anti-war statement appears in scene 1.3:

Goyi: You are generous, gentlemen. I have a personal aversion to vultures.

Blindman: Oh, come come. Nice birds they are. They clean up after the mess.

Cripple: Not like some bastards we know. (He spits).

Aafaa: (posing) In a way you may call us vultures. We clean up after the mess made by others.[36] The populace should be grateful for our presence. (He turns slowly round). If there

> is anyone here who does not approve us, just say so and we quit. (His hand makes the motion of half-drawing out a gun). I mean, we are not here because we like it. We stay at immense sacrifice to ourselves, our leisure, our desires, vocation, specialisation etcetera etcetera. The moment you say, Go, we . . . (He gives another inspection all round, smiles broadly and turns to the others). They insist we stay.
>
> Cripple: I thought they would. Troublesome little insects but . . . they have a sense of gratitude. I mean, after all we did for them.
>
> Goyi: And still do.
>
> Blindman: And will continue to do (pp. 11-12).

Aafaa's statement seems out of place until the meaning of the first "game of cruelty"[37] is understood. The Mendicants are playing at being soldiers and the brevity of the dialogue, the casualness with which justice is handled show how in a chaotic situation, a few men who have the power of the gun can control an entire community. The idea of control by means of gun-power is handled extremely well by getting Aafaa to speak to an imaginary audience since their presence makes no difference.

The phrase "game of cruelty" is self-explanatory and the Mendicants perform in three of them, the first of which has been explained above. The basic message of these games is cruelty among very close friends,[38] to that extent they are a commentary on the Nigerian Civil War. In the second game of cruelty, Goyi plays the role of a victim again and he is subjected to intense physical torture by having a

needle pushed into his flesh. The reason for this game is explained in a casual and indirect way. The conversation preceding the torture is about Bero's treatment of his father and sister. The father has been put in the cellar by the Mendicants and Si Bero is being spied upon by them on Bero's orders. The Mendicants conclude that these unusual orders have been given by Bero because he is a specialist and being a specialist implies having the power of the gun.[39] Aafaa has power over Goyi since he is wielding a needle and because he has the power he proceeds to use it:

> Cripple: Hey. Think he'll do that to his own father?
>
> Blindman: When the Specialist wants results badly enough . . .
>
> Cripple: Yes, but what results?
>
> Aafaa: Does it matter? (Voice change. He points a "needle" held low, at Goyi). Say anything, say anything that comes into your head but SPEAK MAN! (Twisting the needle upwards),(p. 14).

The method used in explaining the reason for the second game of cruelty is one of juxtaposing the actions of Bero against his family with Aafaa's cruelty towards Goyi and in either case power motivates cruelty. The third game of cruelty comes in scene 1.11 where it is fulfilling two main functions. Si Bero is introduced to the concept of "As" since the Mendicants perform their rituals in her presence for the first time; all along they have deliberately kept the rituals to themselves. The second function is structural to the play since Bero appears on the stage for the first

time in scene 1.12 and it is necessary that the idea of the Mendicants' "madness" is planted into Si Bero's mind.[40] Si Bero understands very little of the ritual and in any case she does not pay much attention. In the third game, the Blindman is ritually beheaded by Aafaa.

In the games of cruelty therefore, Soyinka is protesting against the misuse of power in a war situation when law and order have broken down.

The theme of protest is also present in the songs in scenes 2.5, 2.7 and 2.10 which are accompanied by drumming and dancing, so they are performances in their own right. The songs culminate in the mime (scene 2.10) just before the start of the long speeches. The concepts of patriotism and democracy are examined critically by the playwright in the songs and both of them are shown to be empty. The Latin motto in scene 2.7 expresses a traditional Roman idea of patriotism, "Dulce et decorum pro patria mourir" (p. 59)[42] but instead of "decorum," the Mendicants say "quorum"; this error leads them to the idea of democracy in ancient Athens: "In ancient Athens they didn't just have a quorum. Everybody was there! That children is democracy" (p. 60). Patriotism and democracy are juxtaposed in the song in order to bring out the idea of illusion contained in either of them.[43] Democracy has an inbuilt illusion since a gap always exists between election promises and the actions of elected governments. Similarly the principle of "dulce et decorum est pro patria mourir" has an illusion and to illustrate the point,

the mime is performed by Aafaa as monarch, Goyi and the Cripple as ex-servicemen due to be decorated. The mime is presented as a parody of a decoration ceremony which is best explained by Soyinka's own words:

> The Cripple dashes forward to the feet of Aafaa who takes medals from an invisible aide. His eyes roll from side to side, seeing no one. Goyi goes to him, taps him and points to the Cripple. Aafaa tries but he cannot make it. Finally he kisses Goyi on both cheeks, who then kisses the Cripple on both cheeks. He pins the medal on Goyi's left shoulder, who then pins medal on the Cripple's chest (p. 69).

The protest is brought out by the Monarch's lack of real concern to bridge the gap between his exalted position, since he stands straight on his feet, and that of his subject who served with patriotism and lost both legs. The monarch's attempt to reach the Cripple is only a momentary gesture. In the circumstances patriotism seems to be invalid.

3. Bero's Illusion of Power as Illustrated by the Alphabet Game, the Old Man, the Mendicants, and Iya Agba.

The dream structure (Figure 3, p. 64) shows that everything ends in the "As" circle but for purposes of examining the Alphabet Game as it pertains to Bero's illusion of power, a new diagram is necessary. Figure 4 (p. 93) represents "As" in relation to the circles marked B to I. "As" still stands for human nature as it does in the dream structure and all the circles pass through this point. Of all the circles, B and I are of particular importance in this

discussion.

The Alphabet Game is recited by Aafaa from the beginning of Part II but when he gets to the letter I, he refers the matter to the Old Man obviously because the latter is the divinity Obatala, as such he has knowledge of man. A little later, Aafaa interprets the letter I as "inspiration" (p. 52) but the real significance of the letter I comes in scene 2.8 where the following dialogue transpires between Bero and the Old Man:

> Bero: (Violent reaction. Controls himself). You are certified insane. Your fate creates no anxiety in anyone. Take a look at your companions--your humanity.
>
> Old Man: I recognize it. A part of me identifies with every human being.
>
> Bero: You will be disillusioned soon enough.
>
> Old Man: I do not harbour illusions. You do.
>
> Bero: (genuinely astonished) I? You say that of me. I, of all people?
>
> Old Man: Oh, you are in good company. Even the Cripple who is down--to--earth harbours illusions. Now, that's strange. I would have thought you would find that funny.
>
> Bero: I do not need illusions. I control lives.
>
> Old Man: Control-lives? What does that mean? Tell me what is the experience of it. Is it a taste? A smell? A feel? Do you have a testament that vindicates?
>
> Bero: We have nothing that a petty mind can grasp. (Pause). Try if you can, Old Man, to avoid twitching. Control belongs only to a few with aptitude (p. 63).

The significance of the "I" in the alphabet diagram (Figure 4, p. 93) is demonstrated by Bero's concern with himself;

hence the emphasis on the pronoun"I." But Bero does not really know himself; what he considers knowledge is only an illusion. Bero does not realise that the Old Man is the divinity Obatala although the comment, "A part of me identifies with every human being" is intended to let him know this. His inability to see the significance of the comment is part of his blindness and that links him to circle B. In his assertion about "controlling lives," Bero is talking about the power of the gun but the Old Man is talking about the power of Olodumare which includes the creation of the universe and it is this fact that the Old Man tries to explain again to Bero a little later in the same scene:

Bero: (has taken out his gun, weighs it significantly). And lightning strikes. What about it?

Old Man: The boy learns. The boy learns.

Bero: Do not patronize me. Answer me, what about it?

Old Man: That lightning strikes? It could strike you, no?

Bero: Yes.

Old Man: (quiet triumphant smile). Then you're not omnipotent. You can't do a flood and you--(pause)--can't always dodge lightning. Why do you ape the non-existent one who can? Why do you ape nothing?

Bero: You tax my patience. Better watch out in future.

Old Man: (quietly) The future?

Bero: The future, yes. The end . . .

Old Man: Justifies the meanness.

Bero: (again, angry reaction. He controls himself). Just think of this[44]--you have none.

Old Man: (calls after him). Tell me something new. Tell me what is happening in the future. (They all listen to Bero's footsteps receding). If he'd waited, I would have told him what's happening in the future. A faithful woman picking herbs for a smoke-screen on abuse (p. 66).

In this conversation Bero is both an individual and a representative of man but in spite of the obvious signs of the presence of a divinity he cannot see. The reference to "lightning" means the power of the gun to Bero but the Old Man is talking about the real lightning. Momentarily, at the point lightning is discussed, Bero gets the message but he chooses to ignore the direct reference to the power of Olodumare and so he walks away because he is reminded of his inability to know the future. As a demonstration that the past and the future are known to the Old Man in his capacity as Obatala he makes references to two past events. In the phrase "[the end] Justifies the meanness," the Old Man is making a parody of what Bero said to his sister in scene 1.16:

Si Bero: They told me what to look for, where to look for it. How to sort them and preserve them.

Bero: (nods) You haven't waisted your time. I still need things from my former vocation.

Si Bero: Former vocation?

Bero: A means, not an end (Italics mine)(p. 30).

The reference to "the woman picking herbs" is the past in the play as the event alluded too takes place before Bero returns from the front and it is first discussed in scene 1.8. Bero walks away because he does not want to face the limitation of his human nature. The significance of his departure is that man's blindness in the knowledge of higher power than himself will never end in the world.[45]

Bero expresses clearly what he means by power in a statement that contains the most comprehensive definition of the word "specialist" in the play. After explaining to Si Bero that he is head of the Intelligence Section, he proceeds to say, "Power comes from bending Nature to your will. The Specialist they called me, and a specialist is--well--a specialist. You analyse, you diagnose, you--(He aims an imaginary gun)--prescribe" (p.32). The prescription is of course the firing of a gun. The Mendicants and Iya Agba refer to Bero as the specialist several times in the play and in every case, they associate the word with the power of the gun. For the Mendicants, the swagger-stick is also associated with Bero's power. The association should be stressed at this point since Bero's illusion of power is illustrated either by a meaningless application of the power of the swagger-stick or that of the gun, or his inability to use the gun at all in moments of crisis.

The Blindman understands Bero's power of the gun more than any other Mendicant.[46] He is the first to mention the swagger-stick in scene 1.3 when he says, "More power to

his swagger-stick" (p. 10)[47] and he is also the first to use the "gun gesture" when he explains the meaning of Goyi's remark to the Cripple about Bero being a dutiful son:

> Cripple: Him a dutiful son? You're crazy.
>
> Blindman: I know what he means. (He points an imaginary gun) Bang! All in the line of duty! (p. 11).[48]

Between scenes 1.1 and 1.12, that is before the appearance of Bero on the stage, the Mendicants are involved in a number of performances which show that Aafaa is leader of the group. This leadership has been explained above,[49] but a point which has not been made yet is Aafaa's role as spokesman for the group in business matters. On several occasions, he insists on knowing the exact amount of money to be paid to them. For instance in scene 1.10, he asks Si Bero, "How much are we getting today? Let's decide that first" (p. 19) and in the speech that finally drives Bero to use the swagger-stick on Aafaa in scene 1.14, Aafaa's primary concern is money: "That's for us to decide until you say how much" (p. 26). Aafaa is the only one in the play against whom Bero employs his physical power with success but Aafaa is physically very weak as the mime in scenes 1.12 and 1.13 shows. In the fight with the Blindman, Aafaa's weakness is clearly indicated and a faint suggestion is given that even the Cripple is superior to Aafaa in a combat situation. These impressions are conveyed by the stage directions:

> He [Aafaa] feints a slap across Blindman's face Blindman, alert, springs suddenly backwards and grasps his staff. Aafaa looks at him a moment,

then bursts out laughing.

. . . . . .

He [Aafaa] kicks aside his staff but Blindman immediately closes in on Aafaa, reaches for his arms and imprisons them. They strain against each other.

. . . . . .

The two men break apart. Aafaa is panting heavily. The Cripple dashes quickly and brings Blindman his stick. Somewhat sheepishly they troop towards Bero (pp. 22-23).

The Blindman's performance in this fight is clearly superior to the "seeing" Aafaa and the fact that Aafaa breaths heavily indicates that he is exhausted. A few moments after the fight, the Cripple and Aafaa are nearly drawn into a fight but Bero stops them:

Cripple: Hits a blind man (He spits again).

Aafaa: If you think just because you are a cripple you won't get it from me if you go beyond bounds, just try it and see.

Cripple: A blind man. (He spits again).

Aafaa: (raises the rattle threateningly). Don't think because of him being here I can't . . .

(The Cripple counters immediately by raising his crutch) (p. 23).

Bero's rattle is inferior to the Cripple's crutch and the odds seem to be in favour of the Cripple. The physical weakness of Aafaa shows the meaninglessness of the "subjugation" that takes place at the end of scene 1.13. But Bero considers it a conquest and from this point on, he thinks the Mendicants are under his control but this is only another of his illusions.

The Mendicants put on a performance in scene 1.19 for Bero in the presence of Si Bero in which they "confess" insanity. Aafaa's attitude in the scene is a very clear indication of the role-playing that is going on: "Aafaa (by rote, raising his eyes to heaven) The Old Man, sir. He said things, he said things. My mind . . . I beg your pardon, sir, the thing I call my mind, well, was no longer there" (p. 37). The posture which Aafaa assumes is obviously theatrical and the "sir" is merely employed to flatter Bero. In this regard, Bero is as prone to flattery as Kongi in Kongi's Harvest.[50]

The Blindman's reaction in the scene is another indication that a performance is being staged. At first he goes along with the role-playing but he is a very honest man and a point is reached when he decides to be himself and to tell the truth as he knows it. He continues in the performance only after subtle encouragement from the other Mendicants and particularly from Aafaa:

Aafaa: (pointing to Blindman) Even him.

Blindman: Once I even thought I could see him.[51]

Goyi: Oh, but you did, you did.

Blindman: No, not really.

Cripple: You did, you did. The picture forms in the mind, remember?

Goyi: His very words. But any fool knows they form on the eye.

Aafaa: Lord, he mixed us up.

Blindman: You can see me, he said, you can see me,

> Look at me with your mind. I swear I began to see him. Then I knew I was insane (p. 38).

The three sighted Mendicants are using gestures which make it clear that they are performing, but the Blindman needs extra help to realize what is happening. The others try to convey their meaning through the tone of their voice and by the time Aafaa get to "Lord, he mixed us up," the Blindman is again convinced that the performance should continue; hence his "confession" to insanity. Bero and Si Bero of course take the Mendicants at their word. A few lines later, the Mendicants start their usual "As" performance (p. 39) which confuses Si Bero even more; Bero does not understand what the "As" performance is all about but he is fascinated since part of his plan in the bid for power is to discover the meaning of "As" which to him seems to be a source of power. The Old Man, as Obatala, knows the mind of Bero and hints at this point in scene 2.3 during one of the interrogations:

Bero: Why As?

Old Man: Because Was-Is-Now . . .

Bero: Don't!

Old Man: So you see, I put you all beyond salvation.

Bero: Why As?

Old Man: A code. A word.

Bero: Why As?

Old Man: It had to be something.

Bero: Why As?

Old Man: If millions follow . . . that frightens you all (p. 50).

The final comment of the Old Man in the above quotation applies to Bero, but also to his superiors for whom he is trying to get information from the Old Man.[52]

Iya Agba confronts Bero at the beginning of scene 2.6 and the incident demonstrates that Bero's gun is not a source of effective power in a moment of crisis because he is unable to use it. Bero is a frightened man. Soyinka combines mime with dialogue to clarify the message:

> (Bero comes out of the house, holstering a revolver. He goes up to the Old Women's hut quietly and tries to peep inside. Iya Agba leans out of the hut and speaks almost directly in his ear).
>
> Iya Agba: Does the specialist have time for a word or two?
> (Bero is startled, leaps aside)
> Did I scare you?
>
> Bero: (recovering, looks her over carefully). What is a thing like you still doing alive? (p. 56).

Bero is a proud man but he lacks knowledge possessed by Iya Agba. His threats to "proscribe and ban" the Earth Mothers is an ineffectual attempt to salvage his pride and when Iya Agba asks how he intends to carry out his threats, "What can that mean? You'll proscribe Earth itself? How does one do that?" (p. 58). He has no answer, instead he leaves the room. His action at this point is exactly the same as when the Old Man confronts him later in the play and reference has already been made to the incident in question.[53]

The shot at the end of the play is the final illustration of Bero's illusion of power because he cannot kill a divinity, and the Old Man is Obatala.

4. The Relationship Between the Concept of As in The Dream Structure and in Madmen and Specialists

The concept of "As" is one of the main ideas in Madmen and Specialists and it derives from two sources: the liturgy of most Christian churches which says, "As it was in the beginning, so it is now and ever it shall be, world without end, Amen" and the Yoruba idea of recurrence which is expressed in their mythology. From the Christian point of view God is the constant factor in all ages but the Yoruba idea of recurrence is focused on man. Olodumare to the Yoruba people is always in the sky as an overseer of the divinities and men but he is not immediate to them. The lesser divinities are here on earth and they are in constant communion with men. Sometimes man manipulates them for his own ends.[54]

Another look at Figure 3 (p. 64) is necessary at this point. It has been pointed out that the permanent dream structure is equivalent to Yoruba mythology from which its philosophy derives, and the play is the third level of the dream structure. This section attempts to explain how ideas in Yoruba mythology and in the play relate to each other in the "As" circle. It is not concerned with other aspects such as the similarity of Obatala to "As" Bero's view of "As" as a source of power and the association of "As" with

Olodumare which is stated by the Old Man and the Mendicants.

From the Yoruba mythology the relevant idea is the nature of man as articulated by Forest Head in A Dance of the Forests. Forest Head is the equivalent of Obatala and he knows that man's nature will remain the same in the future as it has been in the past. In Madmen and Specialists, Bero shows man's blindness through his failure to learn from the Old Man.[55] This blindness is part of man's inherent nature which is the cause of wars. And through the theme of war Soyinka conveys ideas in the long speeches in scene 2.10. In the speeches man is no longer an individual, rather he is part of man-made institutions. At the beginning of the Blindman's speech, the stage directions read, "the speech should be varied with the topicality and locale of the time" (p. 69). This is a significant point since through it Soyinka is pointing out that the ideas of the play are relevant to all human beings in all ages. The speech is typical of political public addresses aimed at appealing to the widest possible audience. It justifies war on historical and patriotic grounds, "It was our duty and a historical necessity. It was our duty and historical beauty. It shall always be. . . ." (pp. 69-70). The rhyme of duty with beauty is fine poetry but the realities of human suffering in war are covered up in rhetoric. From this point, the speech then proceeds to make allusions to a number of political events in Africa of the 1960's and two examples are explained. "What though the wind of change is

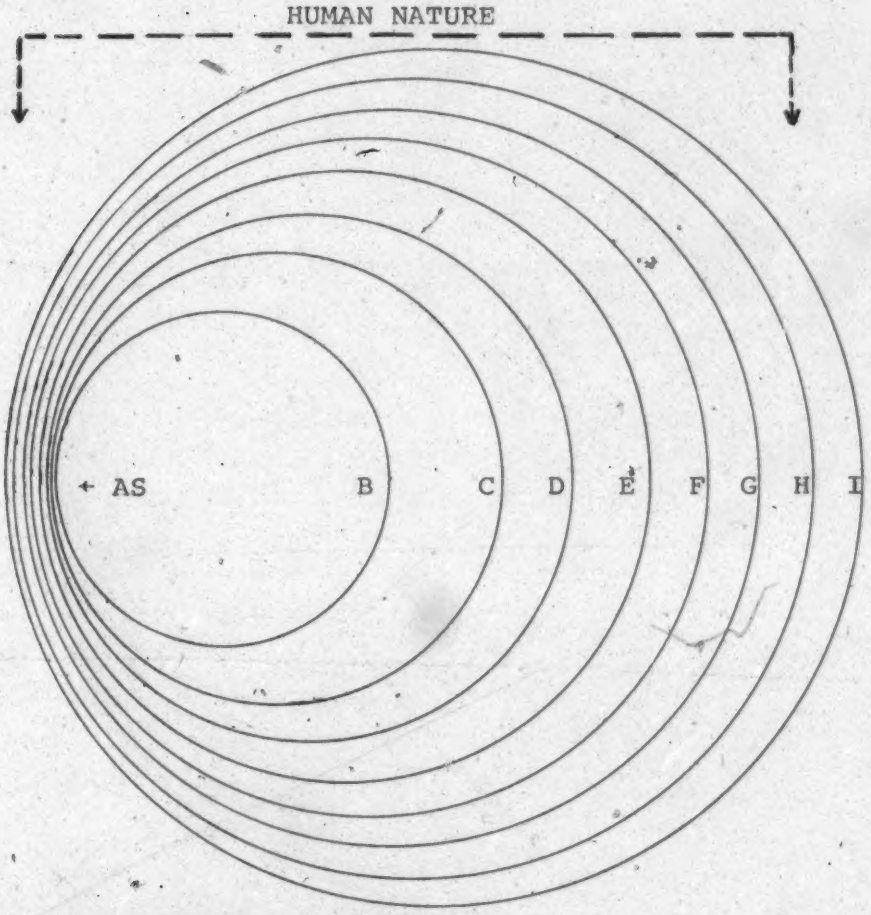
blowing all over the entire continent . . .," (p. 70). This is a reference to movements towards independence and it alludes particularly to a famous speech made by Mr. Harold Macmillan, British Prime Minister at the time who toured a number of countries in Africa early in 1960. One of the countries he visited was Nigeria. The speech marked a big change in British colonial policy.[56] "The copper is quite incidental. Manganese? I don't know what it means. I always thought it was female for Katangese. . . ." (p. 70). Katanga is a province in Zaire (former Congo) and in 1960, there was a secessionist movement similar to the Biafran one in Nigeria.[57] Katanga is mentioned because it was also involved in a civil war situation but the other point which is made is the nonsensical Manganese/Katangese rhyme which sounds beautiful but is empty of meaning like a lot of political oratory.

The structure of the Blindman's speech is of interest since it is like a non-stop repetitive record and the nature of man is like such a record according to Soyinka. The Old Man's speech emphasizes institutions that govern man. They might be of different types but in reality they accomplish similar results, "As Is, and the System is the mainstay though it wears a hundred masks and a thousand outward forms. . . ." (p. 71). Aafaa's speech repeats the same idea in different words.

Finally the theme of recurrence is reflected in the structure of Madmen and Specialists which neither begins nor

ends. The action of the play is already well underway when the lights come up in scene 1.1 from the way the Mendicants play the game of dice. At the close of the play in scene 2.12, the stage directions state that "the song stops in "mid-word" (p. 77). Through this structural patterns, Soyinka has emphasized the consistency of the cyclic nature of man so that what the play shows is only part of a recurring history of humanity.

Figure 4 - Diagramatic Representation of the Alphabet Game.



SELECTED REPRESENTATIVE WORDS

A = As, Aafaa, Acceptance, Adjustment

B = Blindman, Bero

C = Cripple, Contentment

D = Duty, Divinity, Destiny

E = Epilepsy, Election (promises), Electricity

F = Fart, Fulfill

G = Godhead

H = Humanity

I = I, Illusion, Inspiration

CONCLUSION

In his chapter on Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot, Edward Mabley has stated:

> In order to understand a play's construction one must understand the playwright's vision. For it is his vision which has formed and shaped his play. The playwright's vision is the play's content; the play's form is the structure assembled to express this content. . . . (p. 314).

These words apply to Soyinka who, like Beckett, is generally considered a difficult writer. Little critical work has been written on Soyinka and most of it never reaches the roots of his philosophy so that often only the superficial meaning of his words or his techniques have been the focus of attention. Critics have pointed out irony and satire in Soyinka's language but these are only tools to the ideas.

Socially, Soyinka is a deeply committed writer in the sense that he immerses himself in the world of his day rather than isolating himself in the ivory tower of creative sanctuary. It is not surprising that Madmen and Specialists which is an anti-war play was sketched out while he was in solitary confinement in Kaduna prison for protesting against the Nigerian Civil War. In reading A Dance of the Forests, one becomes aware that Soyinka knew, poetically, about the Nigerian Civil War as far back as 1960 in his symbol of the Half-Child because human nature explains all wars. It is this vision of man in Soyinka's works that is constant and that must be grasped in order to understand him. The thesis has attempted

to point in that direction by placing emphasis on Yoruba mythology in the first chapter.

The association of Soyinka with Samuel Beckett in this conclusion should not lead to hasty conclusions that Soyinka is an "absurd" playwright because he certainly is not. In Yoruba mythology man is still very much involved with the super-powers, the divinities and he accepts his weak position. Soyinka is concerned with the need of recognizing man's nature and hopefully the understanding might lead to wisdom through which a better world can be realized.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

[1]Above, p. 1.

[2]Idowu. Olodumare, p. 72.

[3]Below, p. 75.

[4]Aafaa as priest should not be confused with the Priest in scene 1.17.

[5]In scene 1.11, Aafaa leads in three successive rituals starting with, "Yes we know. . . .," then "What do you mean Sir . . .!" and finally, we don't want you in this fraternity" (pp. 20-21).

[6]Because Aafaa is first in the Alphabet, he opens the game of dice in scene 1.1, he also recites the alphabet game at the beginning of scene 2.1, and all major activities in the play are associated with him.

[7]Notice how Aafaa formulates the ritual Rem Acu Tetigisti in scene 1.5 out of a suggestion accidentally stumbled on by the Cripple when he refers to secrets.

[8]Aafaa is the most active character in the play and he is called upon to do almost anything Soyinka wants.

[9]Below, p. 85.

[10]The phrase "Blind Advocate" might only refer to the verbal support the Blindman gives to Si Bero.

[11]The long speech in scene 2.10 increases the number of words spoken by the Blindman. Without it, he would certainly be the one with the least said.

[12]Below, p. 85.

[13]Compare the three questions the Cripple raises in scene 1.5, "I still don't like it. Why is he doing it? His own family too, what is he up to? (p. 13); "Hey. Think he'll do that to his own father?"; "Yes, but what results?" (p. 14) with his reaction to Bero in scenes 1.12 and 1.13.

[14]This assessment is probably true of the Cripple and Goyi, the other two would not find this simple Geographical concept that new.

[15]Ezeokoli., p. 247. Ezeokoli correctly identified the Mendicants as performers, "Led by Aafaa, they are always acting out their experiences in the war. . . ." But because she didn't really get close enough to the Mendicants, she found their language "abstract!" She states, "Language of the Mendicants, for instance, cannot be even remotely rooted in any Nigerian or African culture. It is the abstract language of intellect rather than the concrete language of poetry. This is important because the central idea of the play is conveyed through these Mendicants" p. 246.

[16]Ibid., p. 253. The Earth Mothers equally alluded Ezeokoli who says "The language of the Earth Mothers remains separate from the action. . . ." And she considers the obscurity of their language a fault in the play, "The entire play suffers from this fault. . . ."

[17]Above, p. 30.

[18]Iya Agba is bragging at this point since she knows she will die. Notice her concern about time toward the end of the play.

[19]Above, p. 30

[20]Peter Morton-Williams, "The Yoruba Ogboni Cult in Oyo." Africa, XXX (October, 1960), p. 366.

[21]The meaning of "retribution" in the play seems unclear. The hut with its herbs represents the positive side of Bero; the gun, his negative side. Since he is deluded by power, he achieves nothing in the end and in any case Bero has already renounced his positive side so that the burning of the hut cannot represent retribution to him. It is "retribution" to Si Bero since she devoted her life to the task and everything is destroyed but that would not be a correct interpretation of the word "retribution."

[22]A reference to ancestors who are buried in the ground.

[23]Iya Agba is talking about Si Bero.

[24]Above, p. 28.

[25]Aafaa's hot temper is a factor in the bad relations between him and Si Bero.

[26]For lack of a better term, we can talk about the "end" of Madmen and Specialists, but the play does not end. See comments on p. 92.

[27]Below, p. 73, for interpretation on the "end" of the play.

[28]Ezeokoli, see the Appendix.

[29]Numerous examples are present in the play where the meaning of what goes on is lodged in the stage directions, most of which are mimes. The mime in scene 2.10 just before the Blindman's long speech is as good an example as any.

[30]The Old Man is referring to the Cripple and not to Bero. By "Stop him!" he means kill him.

[31]The Ogboni Cult is responsible for the Egungun masquerades which is a cult of ancestor worship.

[32]Above, p. 69.

[33]Above, p. 30.

[34]Above, p. 54.

[35]Above, p. 62.

[36]This comment seems to refer specifically to the events which led to the army mutiny in Nigeria in January 1966. The politicians had messed up and the soldiers moved in to put things in order. Despite the killings of important figures, the January 1966 army mutiny was received with a sense of relief by many Nigerians. See Sir Rex Riven, The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 (Nigeria: (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd., 1970), p. 83. "The public of Nigeria, by and large, were relieved that the Services had taken over control after months of crisis. They felt that here were impartial people who could clear up the mess, deal with the guilty and organize a new constitution, guaranteed to prevent the recurrence of such a situation. . . ." (Italics mine).

[37]Below, p. 76, Line 26.

[38]In Bero's case, it is of course animosity between father and son which is even closer.

[39]Below, p. 83.

[40]Below, p. 86.

[41]There is a Yoruba belief that if an animal which is being sacrificed is not beheaded at one stroke then the sacrifice is contaminated. Aafaa says something quite close to this.

[42]A near translation in English of this Latin motto is, "It is pleasing and proper to die for my country." Soyinka has left out the verb "est," the original version reads, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mourir."

[43]See scene 2.9 (p. 66) for references to elections and the falsehood of election manifestos.

[44]Bero is gesturing with his gun.

[45]This is a transition situation in which the play merges into the general philosophy of recurrence in human nature.

[46]In a sense Bero is linked with the idea of blindness from the beginning of the play. But the Blindman "sees" more than the sighted in the play.

[47]New information is often given when the Mendicants are engaged in rituals. The reader does not realize its significance until much later in the play.

[48]The Mendicants are mocking Bero's idea of duty which has driven him to the point of ill-treating his Father and to suspect his sister.

[49]Above, p. 67.

[50]Soyinka, Kongi's Harvest, P. 36-37. Note especially, Kongi's fear of "the people" (p. 36).and the assertion of himself "I am the spirit of Harvest" (p. 37). The use of the pronoun "I" is similar to Bero's when his "illusion" is unmasked by the Old Man.

[51]The conversation refers to the Old Man.

[52]Bero despises his superiors but that's just his pride. He is on a mission on their behalf.

[53]Above, p. 82.

[54]Yoruba divinities are asked by the penitents to punish opponents.

[55]This is a point of transition in the play when the individual's actions lead into the "As" circle.

[56]See Keesing's Contemporary Archives, (February, 20-27, 1960), p. 17267.

[57]Biafra was temporarily that part of Nigeria which used to be called the Eastern region.

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